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Anna C. Brown

MY

EARLY DAYS.

BY

ELIZA W. FARNHAM.

Each child, but especially the girl-child, would task the whole lore of a sage, deep as Shakspeare, to distinguish those subtle emotions, which we grown folks have outlived.—BULWER.

For not to us on earth is given
The ripe fulfillment of desire;—
Desire of Heaven itself is Heaven,
Unless the passion faint and tire;
So upward still, from hope to hope,
From faith to faith, the soul ascends;
And who has scaled the ethereal cope
Where that sublime succession ends?

MILNES.

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To G. B. K.

Not by way of introduction or explanation to you, dear friend, who know me so well, do I write this exordium. Neither that I may put you forward as the apology for the book which now lies before me. If I felt that it needed any, (as to its motive) I should return it to the shelf whence I have just taken the manuscript. If I believed that, (as to its execution) it was inferior to my best power, I would not ungraciously charge you with the responsibility of its production. Then why do I place your sign upon this page? Because, in view of what is done, there are a few words to be said which can be more freely and vitally said to you than to any other individual, or to that vague personage, the public.

We have each trodden the steep round of the globe of life by difficult, though different paths. And the toil has brought to each a kindred result. You know it is one article of my Faith, that like natures have like experi-

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ences, however the outward phases of them may vary. There are two trees on the lawn, where, of old, we were wont to linger in deep talk—a Pine and a Chestnut. On the mountain, higher up, and elsewhere in wild and waste places, less beautiful and fertile, are other Pines and Chestnuts. The outward facts of their existence differ more than yours or mine have, yet, to each there is the same interior result of peculiar nutrition and growth. Human souls draw from the external, like the forest trees, what they best assimilate, and though one be planted in a palace and the other in a hovel, the near and mortal, and shall I not say the distant and immortal, goal of each is the same, with difference only in the time and travail of winning? My nursed and petted Pine is larger and quicker of growth than the poor stunted trees that struggle up towards Heaven, among those huge masses of rock where we used sometimes to wander. It is better fed and of nimbler movement in its progress, but it is a pine still. Its evening music falls more sweetly on my ear, because it comes from the finer touch of airs that lie nearer the high courts of the Heavens.

Experience like that sound comes to us softened by distance. Contemplate that of any soul, no matter how much greater than ours, with kindred desires PREVAILING in it, and if we can come near enough we shall find joys

and pains of like significance unto our own, occupying there. The merciful wife of my poor neighbor, the shoemaker, would make, as a legislative woman, a Duchess of Sutherland, were she in her castles with her incomes, and I have no doubt their inmost daily experiences would be found very similar, could they be closely and honestly compared. Because both are good, true-souled women struggling, each in her fashion, towards a better than her actual. What matter the ducal robes and jewels of the one, or the patched threadbare garments of the other, to the momentous question of soul-destiny, which each is asking for herself? Either may prove helps or hindrances to her whom they befal. But neither can make or unmake the sublime result which must come to each in virtue of her Human Life.

The cup of hemlock was not the first trial of Socrates. Had we been with him there in Athens, you and I, we should have seen that the days and weeks went over him much as ours do; sorrows, humiliations, and triumphs, following each other, as to all lesser souls. History records them not, as the viewless air brings not down to our ears from my lofty Pine, the sharp tones and broken cadences I should hear were I standing with my head among the boughs of those outcast dwarfs among the rocks.

We both *disclose* and *conceal* ourselves in the external, which becomes thinner and less available as the soul exceeds it. As the true man becomes immanent in his outgrowths, the true man will rise to claim the highest position in our visible creation. Time was when Louises, and Charleses, and Henrys, and Georges Royal, could be made out of the commonest and even vitiated clay, and held sacred too, because the place superseded and the man were but the symbols of that with which time and chance had clothed him. It will never more be thus. We shall live to rejoice in beholding the inauguration of the Spiritual—to see, clear and tender, the dawn of that era which is to enthrone woman in her own and man's reverence, and so bring the creative power which the All-wise has delegated, to earth, into free harmonious and artistic relation to its fruits. Then life shall glorify itself in deed, and in truth; and, divinely born, the human soul shall know and reverence itself, as the effect of a Divine cause, working through pure and holy instruments of true womanhood and righteous manhood.

Rebuke not my faith because this day is distant—its beams of promise scarcely yet visible in the grey east. For, dim though they be, they are there, and reach to us,—to you and me in long and quivering lines of thought and aspiration, at whose touch our souls tremble

and break forth in music, as the strings of the wind harp, when the airs of night wander, darkling, over them. Truly I thank God for life,—but almost more, for the day in which it came to me—the day of so much truth—of such high powers—of such uplifting prophesy—of such divine recognitions.

But high blessing can only be seized, like fruit that ripens on the topmost bough, by the hand that is courageous and resolute enough to take it where it waits us; and, you and I, sisters on the way to the vast Beyond, have a common joy in those fellow-travellers, who prove, by their augmenting personality, as we advance, how far exalted, above everything that can attach to it, is the life embodied in the soul—the life which possesses the great future, and thus is clothed with an interest, against which the whole body of nature, with all her mystical inferior existences, is as a grain of sand against a universe. This interest it is in human experience, as at once the cause and evidence of that sublimest of all phenomena, human growth, which calls for and justifies that life-analysis by which our literature is beginning to be very noticeably marked, and of which courageous autobiography is perhaps the best form. It is a kind of book I did never use to like, and do not now, when it stops at the soul's gates. You must let me in there, or I would rather take

the history of your life at the hand of any honest, clear-headed spectator of it than your own.

You, if you are separating and shrinking, weighing and withholding, dividing and combining, with the world before your eyes, are the poorest narrator of yourself that can be found. If Mrs. Grundy is your arbiter, Mrs. Grundy will, to a certainty, be your biographer—however, you may nominally elect yourself to that office. And the highest value, which, as I conceive, this sort of writing can possess, is that of its fearless and clear analysis of the life-processes, by which a man or woman has been produced, and set, to work or idleness, in this world of ours. This is what we wish now, of all souls, and I am quite sure that my neighbor, Mrs. Crispin, as she lay in bed the other day, with her eighth child, a twenty-four hours baby beside her, and related to me her early experiences, furnished therein a more interesting and improving memoir than any Duchess or Peeress could have, who had not suffered and grown in the suffering, as she had.

You will say perhaps that I have begun too abruptly, but if I had dated two years back of the time I have chosen, I should only so far, and as I think fruitlessly, have extended the painful relation of my early sufferings. And I like directness. With a life history to tell it seems

to me as well to begin at once, as to hover in preparation, wearying both auditor and narrator. And that we may be spared that too common experience, I will say no more, except that I rejoice in you, as it is rarely given to one woman to rejoice in another.

E. W. F.

MY EARLY DAYS.

CHAPTER I.

"Folded eyes see brighter colors than the open ever do."

The storm was over, but the whole meadow where the trees stood was submerged, so there was no nutting for me that day.

"Dear, dear," I said to myself, with many a sigh heaved from the bottom of my little, sad heart, while I stood watching the exhausted clouds as they trooped away toward the lake, "dear, dear, how I wish it hadn't rained. She will never be away so long again, and I might have had a play with the squirrels, and filled my basket, without being scolded or beaten, when I came in." I had a complaint against the heavens and the earth, for defrauding me of the rare pleasure I had lain awake nights to anticipate—the pleasure of two whole days of freedom—alone. And now the last was gone, and there had not been an hour of blessed sunshine in either. The out-door solitude under the glorious autumn skies, the wild frolic with winds and flying leaves, the half gay and half solemn wanderings amid the golden showers of the soft maples and butternuts along the creek side, the boat-row up to the "ripple," where the water that was elsewhere dark and sluggish, spread itself broadly out over a bed of bright gravel, and seemed to dance joyfully down it; none of these were now possible. I must lay aside holiday thoughts,

and get supper. So I dragged the great table which was almost as high as my head, from the wall, and proceeded to lay dishes, and place food for the three men who were at work somewhere on the farm.

I brightened my fire, laid fresh coals upon the lid of the iron oven, which, filled with potatoes, swung from a hook high above the blaze, and having put the roasted rye into the coffee-pot, and filled it with boiling water, I sat down, as I often did when alone, to think upon the past, for my little memory had already its little store of bright and dark incidents, and then to dream of the future.

Ah, what blessed gifts lay in that wide, infinite future! The power to do—the power to be; and, to my child-faith, both were attainable without suffering. The cloud of *sacrifice*, the black shadow of *struggle* had not yet darkened that bright horizon which rimmed, but did not bound, the glorious Before. I peopled its long avenues with recipients of bounties which I would dispense. I made the poor, rich; the suffering, happy; the feeble, strong; the bad, good and loving. In imagination, I gave, joyfully, what came to me without cost, and saw myself the possessor of continually increasing stores of such wealth.

I verily believe that my growing heart was as purely moved in these directions, as any that ever beat with mortal pulse; for in my most glorious achievements, it was only my deeds, never myself, that commanded praise. I never imagined myself clothed with external splendor, or gifted with beauty, when approving eyes seemed to gazed upon me. My experience, indeed, was the extreme reverse of both these conditions. I was wretchedly clad, and said to be ugly to a degree, but I felt that in the central heart of me there was something that people loved and approved wherever they found it; and so, at this time, I rarely pined at the poverty of my personal gifts, or my untoward fortunes.

A heavy curtain of lead-colored cloud had stretched itself broad and dark across the clear, mellow west just as the sun

was setting, and the twilight was made chill and sullen by it, at the moment when I thought a flood of golden glory would have overflowed the earth and dripping autumn foliage. I had retreated from the window to the fireside, and sat there gazing with my natural eye into a fantastic palace of glowing coals; but, with my spiritual vision, beholding the ecstasies of a poor woman whom I had released from prison, and restored to her frightened, friendless children, when a heavy footfall at the door recalled me to the actual.

"Is supper ready, *Tonewanta?*" asked the man who opened it.

He had a kindly voice and smile, and as he entered, he cast a pleased glance at the table and the baking kettle. "All right, Dolly," chucking my chin in his hard fingers, "good girl," he said, with an awkward approach to a caress, which, though I liked him well, and was not at all afraid of him, I managed to escape from.

"Shy, eh?" he exclaimed. "Well, you're a strange little thing. You've the face of a grandmother on a doll's body. You're not bigger than my thumb, and you look thirty at least. Eight to-morrow, are you? You shall have a present, Doll. What would you like? These potatoes," he continued, lifting the cover at the same moment, "are so fine, that you must have a birth-day present to-morrow, surely. What shall it be, little one?"

"I'd rather have a book than anything else, Mr. Radford," I replied; "but you can't get that, I know, so I shan't choose anything."

"Well, we will see, we will see," he said; "get the supper on the table now, for the boys'll be here directly."

I laid the potatoes, brown and smooth, and very tempting to the eye of my companion, upon a large plate, and placed it on the hot hearth. Then he lifted the kettle and its cover to their places for me, and, after polishing himself off at the long towel behind the door, and scratching his hair up on one side, and

down on the other, and all ways on the top of his bald head, we we sat down to wait.

I was not in an external mood, and I had such entire trust in his kindness toward me, and felt his presence so little, that I immediately fell to finishing up the scene of the mother and her children. I had dreamed long enough to forget that there was anything real in the world besides them, when a hand was laid heavily, interrogatively upon my shoulder, and I heard my name spoken, and the question emphatically uttered: "What *do* you think of when your face looks so *awful old?* Tell me," he added; giving me a slight shake after waiting a moment.

"Of things you can't understand, Mr. Radford," I replied.

"Thunder and lightning!" his favorite and most profane expression, "of things I can't understand? Greek things, or Latin things, are they? or maybe Indian things, pappoose? What do you mean? Tell me now," and he laid my hand under his own upon his knee.

I hesitated. "Could he understand," I questioned, if I spoke frankly to him, "that these dreams were the only real part of my life; that all the slavish toil which he saw me perform every day, so far beyond my childish strength, all the passion, threatening, and beating were as nothing to me; that my life was without and beyond them, quite?" I longed to speak to somebody, but I was afraid, not merely of being laughed at, but that he *could not see my world*, if I attempted to show it him, and I had a shrinking dread of the exposure. So I stood silent.

"Tell me, now, Dolly," he repeated kindly, "what it is. The old woman says you are half fool and half witch; and though I don't believe her, I *should* like to hear what you are thinking of sometimes when you forget that her fist, or the broomstick, or maybe something heavier, is just ready to fall on you."

I was shocked, and made dumb to him, by this common mention of the outrage and ignominy of my daily life. My nerves became lines of flame running through my stunted body as the speech fell from his lips. I could not then have given him a word of

my confidence, though, but for his last utterance, I should probably have told him of the woman and her children, or some other imaginary object, which my dreaming charity had overflowed, and so have opened to him the vast kingdoms of my delights.

As it was, I only said, with a little more firmness, "Mr. Radford, you can't understand the things I think of, though you are a man, and know a great deal that I don't. When I am as old as you are, I shall know much more; for I shall read all the books I can get, and I shall talk with many wise people, and if you live in my part of the country, you'll see what I *think* of now, for I shall be *doing* it then."

What he would have replied I never knew; for at that moment the boys came, and we sat down to supper. These three individuals were almost the only human companions I had. Mr. Radford was a man of thirty-five or thirty-eight years, unmarried, a native of New England, but long out of it. Temperate, conscientious, practical and unspeculative, he was a respectable working man; with heart enough to feel for my obvious sufferings—such as arose from being beaten, or from sleeping cold, or from being compelled to labors for which I lacked strength; but too destitute of imagination, to have the faintest conception of the deeper pain which came from none of these causes, and could not be removed by abundance of food, a warm bed, or even a birth-day present. Yet I spoke more freely to him than to any other person.

One of the boys, Albert, was a lad of perhaps fifteen, of excellent moral nature, and more than ordinary intelligence. The library of the district was kept at his father's house, two miles away; and his employment on our farm was a providential opening to the small collection of books there gathered, for which almost every day I exercised a glad and exulting thankfulness; Albert had read what then seemed to me a great deal. He knew much about Napoleon's life and wars; Bolivar, also, and the first settlement of South America; and he used to

discourse to me on these subjects, not always, as I have since concluded, in the most lucid style, since I believed for a long time, that Bolivar was the immediate successor to the glorious Incas; and that the wrecks of Cortes' ships would be still visible, if I could stand upon the shore whence he witnessed their destruction. I used to wonder how he felt in the midst of his career, which, somehow, seemed much more interesting and real to me then than Napoleon's (the romance made it so, I suppose), and fancy that if he had done good to the poor people whom he subdued, he should have felt himself the happiest man in the world.

The other boy was three or four years older—ignorant, vain of his curling hair, his white, regular, unmeaning teeth, and impudent manners: selfish and shallow: to himself a person of importance—to me nothing, but a body with a mouth to be supplied; nothing more or else than a similar aperture would have been in a wooden image of a man, if it had required the same quantity of food to fill it.

I had, besides, a large cat, which was my bed-fellow; a dog that I occasionally condescended to romp with; and innumerable poultries, which, however, grew out of my affections every year.

"Dolly," said Albert, while we sat at the table, "I am going home to-night, and I'll take that History of Ireland back, if you have read it, and bring you something else. What would you like?"

"I have not read that," I answered, "and I shan't. You can take it with you."

"Don't you like it?"

"No; and I don't like the people it describes, either. They would cut each other to pieces from morning till night. I can't bear to read of their horrid fighting. Bring me the Life of William Penn again. How much I should like to have been under the great tree with him when he had the Indians there!"

"Your mother was a Quaker, wasn't she, Dolly?" said curly-

head, speaking for the first time with a slight sneer. He hated that people, and never spoke of them but with contempt.

His words and tones sent the fire of a deep indignation from my heart to my fingers' ends. It was sacrilege for him to speak thus of my mother; and though I had never been angry with him before, because he had not the power or opportunity to make me so, I now said, hotly, "Don't you speak about my mother! She was good."

"She was a Quaker, though; for my aunt says she was, and I guess she knows. And I should think you'd love them all, Dolly, this one is so good to you. Is the black and blue spot gone off your arm yet?" he asked, with a touch of kindness in his voice.

"Let the child alone," said Mr. Radford, interposing—as he often did, when people were worrying me—too late to save my feelings; for by this time the tears had gathered in my eyes: but I retained steadiness enough still to say spitefully, "The bad Quaker is your aunt—she's no relation of mine nor my mother's." And I left the table and the room.

CHAPTER II.

"And this our life which God hath given,
How 'tis checkered o'er with grief and pain!
As, when the night and morning meet, they dapple
The sky o' the east."

I HAD lived two years at Maple Spring. It was a large country house, unfinished—standing upon the high bank of a dark, sluggish creek, that meandered through rich meadows and was so extremely tortuous that it multiplied distance immensely, running often four or six miles to make one or two. From side to side it went of the narrow alluvial belt which in earlier

times had been the bed of a broad stream, and which was shut in on both sides by considerable hills, crowned with forest, and generally clothed from foot to summit with wild vines of grape and hop, blackberry, raspberry, plum and nut trees. The margin of the water was fringed with the willow and poplar, while a little further removed stood the magnificent maple, imbowering its humbler brethren, and occasionally shaking hands with an imperial elm on the opposite side. In the immediate vicinity of the house are only a few apple and peach trees, and, across the road, a large wild cherry, my especial delight and pleasure in the season of its fruit. In its generous arms I spent many a golden hour. I could step easily from the fence upon its lower boughs, and ascend to its very top, without once having my head whirl. It contained a dozen birds'-nests, of which I was the special guardian ; and I fancied, as I used to sit, reading or dreaming, close by them, that the old birds sung more sweetly than when I was not there. They were grateful, perhaps ; or I loved them so much, and had such a care for them, that I felt they ought to be, and that made me as happy as if they were.

I had lived two years at Maple Spring. I had gone there at six, two years after my mother's death ; and now I was eight. I was an adopted daughter ; and the journey of four or five hundred miles which I had made in the company of my new parents, to reach our future home, had been one long holiday. It was interrupted often enough, by visits along the way, not to be tedious ; and the new places and people I was constantly seeing, had been a succession of delights. I had been treated, generally, with kindness ; had been praised for my quickness at learning ; had been pardoned many acts of childish mischief ; and, passing through the country of the Tonewandas, had been called by their name, to express resemblance of color. The appellation had degenerated, by hourly use, to Tonewanta, and the diminutive Tonny. From which it may be concluded that I was not a fair child. Neither had I any other element of beauty. The two years' neglect and hardship I had

passed through, had not improved my person. My features had grown older, my skin darker, and my hair, which was never before neglected, had become frowsy and rough ; for, on reaching Maple Spring, I had found the woman who was to be my mother, quite a different person to the one I had been riding and visiting with during all those weeks of travel. Domestic cares and labor seemed to give her a new character, and the exchange was a loss to us all. Her ill-temper, which had slumbered during the journey, found abundant provocation in the many annoyances consequent upon the resumption of her position at home ; and though it did not for some time descend directly upon me, I was made sufficiently uncomfortable by it from the first ; for I had ever a dread of a violent temper. Nothing in my own nature warmed to meet it. I could defy it, but it was an internal, calm defiance, breathed from conscious superiority to such rage. I could not quarrel, but I could be always cool and strong. Hence, when her fury was turned upon me, my small self-possession and indifference to her greatest cruelties, seemed only to increase her rage. She called me fool, witch, devil. She was baffled, defeated, dissatisfied, and never victor ; for when she had threatened and beaten me, she felt I was not yet subdued. Submissive I certainly was ; but, as I often heard her say, there was something in it she could not understand, and which always made her feel that she had not gained her point—had not cast out the spirit which ever and again circumscribed her triumphs. These two years had, I think, made us fully known to each other, but had brought us no nearer to terms of peace. For though I was as quiet as at first, I was more resolute, having a deep sense of wrong to sustain me—a clear conviction that I ought to resist the rapacious selfishness that would have extinguished my soul and left my body a convenient machine for the use of my oppressor.

I had no young companions. Very rarely was I permitted to spend an hour in play with two or three children from the next house. They attended a school, and had books and classes to

talk of, which I was denied participation in; yet they were not companions for me in any sense, except that they were full of young life, of which, old as were my ways and thoughts, I had an abundant fund when it was stirred by their presence.

Once, in a confidential moment, in my favorite resort, at the root of the great maple-tree near the spring, I had said to the most sympathetic and loving of these children—her name was Betsey, and she was about two years my senior:

"When you are a woman, what do you think you shall like to do, Betsey?"

"Oh," she replied, "I shall get married, and get some of my mother's tin pans, and have a cow, and some plates, and cups and saucers, and knives and forks, and live in a house by myself; and when anybody comes to see me, I shall make a short-cake, and give them currants and sugar with it."

My eyes were fixed earnestly on her face while she was answering my question; and more rapidly than she spoke did I idealize her thick nose, and expressionless lips, and faded grey eyes. She was no longer the plain Betsey, ambitious only of being at the head of her spelling class, and having certain tin pans and a cow for her life achievements. I looked into and peopled her soul.

"Oh, Betsey," I said, while I felt my eyes glow and my brain reel with the tremendous disclosure I was about to make of myself, "wouldn't you like to be a very rich and great woman, to go and stop bad people from hanging and murdering each other, and let folks out of prison, and get teachers for poor children, and give them good books, and have the men vote for Mr. Clay, so that everybody could have plenty of money? You and I could go together in a carriage, and where we went the people would thank us and love us so much!"

Her grey eyes opened upon me wider and wider, but there was no glow of sympathy in them; even wonder could not long keep them astare. When I came, breathless, to the end of my summing up of life, she looked quiet and commonplace as usual, and

answered me, for the first time, with somewhat of the severity I was accustomed to from older persons:

"Mother says she thinks, sometimes, you are either foolish or crazy, and I believe you are. Men do all such things, and women stay at home and cook, and milk, and sew."

There was a moment's silence, during which I shrunk to an atom in my own eyes, before the rebuke of what I felt to be her common sense; but I collected dignity enough, nevertheless, to struggle up to utterance once again, and said:

"But for all that, a *woman*," and I had to emphasize the word to convey some faint notion of what I felt in it, "*could do a great many good things.*"

It was my first and last attempt to be understood by Betsey. That night, as I lay on my little straw bed underneath a large one, which was unoccupied, I burned nervously all over at the thought of having spoken so to her. I felt a sort of sacrilegious guilt in having so exposed the secrets of my heart. I had read in some paper a short sketch of Elizabeth Fry's labors, and that, no doubt, had given direction to the struggling sympathies and yearning tenderness of my nature. Their commonest manifestation provoked only coarse laughter, or threats, or actual violence from everybody about me save two individuals, my adopted father and the boy Albert. Even Mr. Radford, with his reasonable, measured sort of kindness, was certain to be very much amused if he saw me racing to the rescue of the small or timid among my poultry from the strong or tyrannical.

Nothing fired me so irresistibly as the cause of a victim. The pigs sometimes intruded in the preserved inclosures sacred to young chickens, ducks, turkeys, and goslings, and as they robbed them of their food, and frightened them sorely, I could not rest in the times of these invasions. I was quick and enduring as the deer of the forest, and the little animals had difficulty in escaping me when I was thoroughly roused. One afternoon I had driven out the same pig many times, and had fed him, even, in order to be entirely merciful; but he came back again. His

cool, brutish way of walking in among the broods for which I felt such a tenderness, and almost turning over with his senseless snout the mother hens, angered me deeply. I started after him, with a piece of thin board in my hand, bent upon inflicting exemplary punishment on him, but in the use of my weapon I made a misdirected blow, and broke the leg of one of my young charges. It dropped to the ground with a piteous little cry, and laid quite still. How terrible a revulsion of feeling came over me. My head spun, the sunlight turned to darkness, the earth seemed to heave before me, and the air became palpable. I could scarcely breathe it; but I struggled forward to the little victim, took it tenderly in my hand, and sat down on the grass till I could recover myself and pour out my pity, which was not unavailing, because it relieved my own heart. The little fragile thing lay in the hollow of my small hand, looking more tender and perishable than anything ever had before. Its broken leg stuck awkwardly out, and it only opened its eyes when I moved it a little, and closed them as soon as it was still, it seemed from exhaustion.

"If it had never lived, now," I said to myself, as I raised and brooded it under my warm chin, "it never would have suffered," and for a moment I wished intensely that it had died in the shell. "But it has lived," I thought, "and been happy, and would be now if I had not been so angry with that pig; and I should not have been so angry but for having to leave my book so often to run after him."

I did not dare to take the chicken to the house for attention, because, although very little value was set on my pets, and no one took any considerable interest in them but myself, I should almost certainly be beaten, at least violently scolded, for what I had done. I knew that broken legs were set with splinters of wood around them; but my notions of surgical operations were so extremely theoretical and imperfect, and my tenderness for the little sufferer so intense, that I dared not touch except in the way of caressing it. Mr. Radford was at work in the

meadow near the house. I said he will set it for me, for he knows a great deal about animals. I gathered two or three small splinters of wood, took a bit of soft cloth, and went down to him. I knew he would laugh, because, though he was kind, he lacked tenderness. I did not then understand how it was, but I know now that he lacked deep reverence for life, and for the right to its enjoyment which God has bestowed on everything he has created. Death to the lower animals is in harmony with God's law, but not pain. When I came to Mr. Radford, he gave me the same good-natured glance he always did, and said, as he looked more closely into my face :

" Why, Tonny, what's the matter, child, that you are so pale ? What have you got there under your chin ?"

" Oh, Mr. Radford," I said, " don't laugh. I have hurt one of my poor little chickens so much, and I want you to help me. Look."

My own distress checked his mirth, and he said, as he laid his rake down, and pulled off his large gloves—he always wore gloves in summer, his skin was so very fair, and blistered so readily:

" Yes, Tonny; what have you done ?—broken a leg, eh ?" and he blew an immensely prolonged whistle between his lips, which quite appalled me, for I feared that it meant there was no hope. He examined the fracture, as I thought rather roughly, but I suppose with a far tenderer touch than many a writhing human patient is handled. It extorted piteous cries, but in a moment he said :

" Sit down on the hay-cock, and take it in your lap, and hold the leg just so—very still."

I did not move, and in a moment he had a splinter on one side under my finger, and another under my thumb; a bandage was wrapped about all, and I was just rising with a light and thankful heart, after a few words of direction and encouragement, when my adopted father came up. I did not call him father, nor his wife mother, but uncle and aunt. I could have

given him the tenderer appellation, for he was always kind and gentle to me, but he did not check his wife's harshness, and that fact made it impossible for me to give him the title which, to me, represented every sort of protection and blessing.

"What, Dolly," he said, "got a sick chicken? Is Mr. Radford, a good doctor, eh?"

"He has mended a broken leg, sir," I said. "But you told me yesterday the boys should mend the fence, so that the pigs couldn't get in any more, and then its leg wouldn't have been broken."

"Did the pigs break it?"

"No, sir; I broke it driving one away. But," I added, "I do not wish aunt to know that I did it."

"No, she shall not, child; say nothing about it to her. You have done right to tell me the truth; but she need not know of it at all—and the fence shall be mended to-night. Mr. Radford, when one of the boys comes this way, send him up to do it."

"Thank you," I said; and I felt so truly grateful that, as he came toward me, I put aside my nursling and gave him a kiss.

CHAPTER III.

"But who shall tell, when want and pain have cross'd
The clouded light of some forsaken day,
What gems of beauty have been crushed and lost,
What flashing thoughts have woke to fade away?"

My adopted father, or Uncle John, as I always called him, was a man of about fifty. He was a little inclined to stoutness, slightly bald, with square and rather heavy, but well-defined features, the expression of which was altogether pleasing; his mouth indicated good-humor, sweetness and patience; his chin

was full, but not prominent; his forehead ample in height and breadth; his nostrils were well expanded, but the defect in his face was, that above them the nose lacked prominence. It gave you an idea of a too easy good nature. He had fine teeth, and a laugh that was so sympathetic, that the sound of it always infected me, even when I knew nothing of what provoked it. Good stories were his delight, with a pipe. The sight of him, sitting comfortably beside a great fire, in a winter night, smoking and telling, or hearing stories, used to suggest my brightest picture of comfort. It seemed so sufficient, indeed, that when I was quite young, but little more than six, I thought nothing could be finer than the seeing, except the actual enjoying. So one day, when I was left alone, I determined upon trying it. I filled the pipe, placed the large chair at the right angle to the hearth, and sat down. One puff—I thought the pleasure must be in those which came after. But the next two or three seemed worse, and the few which followed still worse. The pipe fell from my hand, and in an effort to reach the door—for the room seemed suddenly turned to a dark stifling oven—I fell to the floor, from which somebody, coming in shortly, raised me in great alarm; but I was conscious, and able to signify, by gesture, that there was nothing to fear. It was not aunt, or I know not how I should have escaped. I never indulged myself in experiments but in her absence, and the good nature of the household generally shielded me from her wrath. In this instance it was my good friend Albert, and after I recovered so as to tell him what I had done, he seemed to be so much amused that I could not refrain from asking if men and women smoked, and found so much comfort in it, and nobody laughed at them, why should not children do the same, without being laughed at, and without being sick, too? But he only laughed more, and did not condescend to enlighten me.

It was quite different with my uncle in the times of domestic tempest. From being the comfortable, sunny, genial person I have described, he became shrinking, subdued, careful of him-

self, and reluctant to make a demonstration in behalf of the victim, be it whom it might. He had a strong repugnance to violence; scarcely ever struck an animal, and shed tears, secretly, over a favorite horse when he lay dying in a field adjoining the house. I was always assured, by his troubled look, that he sympathized strongly with me in difficulties; but this did not satisfy me. I felt that he ought to have and exercise the power to rescue me, and that feeling caused me to reserve myself toward him, as I have said.

He had been a seaman; had made many voyages to different parts of the world; had finally lost his vessel, and been taken prisoner at an early period of the war of 1812, and having got exchanged, had fled the sea-board and penetrated this forest region, where he was now the owner of a large property, industrious, enterprising, respected, but in his domestic life subjugated by a violent and coarse woman. At the time of their marriage, she was considered to be making a painful descent from her social level. She had been educated; was intelligent, spirited, and independent to a daring degree. She had been handsome in her early years, and must, I think, have been always artful. Thus she had fascinated the uncultivated youth who had run away from an obscure, poverty-stricken home, to get himself born into the world of which he had before only dreamed. They had now been married twenty years, and the well-bred woman had degenerated into the reckless termagant, who was sometimes even profane, while her unpolished husband, against her many bad influences, and the strong tide of an adverse fortune, had preserved his original goodness, untainted by excess, unsoiled by the degradations of selfishness.

Let me not judge her too harshly. She had never been a mother! That irreparable calamity to woman, falling upon a hard, daring nature, ought to move me to charitable consideration for some of the bad acts which make her memory seem a bitterness and degradation—a hideous, foul spectre, haunting that beautiful morning-time of my life. I yearned for love, for

tenderness, for beauty, for sympathy in my wild dreams of universal mercy—of good deeds that should spread happiness through the earth. I received instead, blows, raving, denunciation. I was called a fool, forbidden books, threatened, and severely punished when found reading them. I might as well have been punished for breathing. To learn was almost equally a necessity of my being.

Thus I was repulsed, and my thoughts and emotions, driven back to their source, remained pent in a fiery tumult, or the half slumber of wonder, overshadowing the unknown path before me; or they flowed out upon the objects about me, and found expression in soliloquy—in talks with trees, with the waters, with contemplative cows, and thoughtful-looking sheep. I longed for human tenderness and help, but nature never failed me, when, lacking these, I turned to her. How rich in beauty and purity she was to me in those days! The spring alone seemed inexhaustible. It oozed visibly from a dark hillside, and lay gathered in crystal purity at its foot, surrounded by old crumbling logs on three sides, and the bright, gravelly earth over which it flowed on the fourth. A loose house of small logs had been built over it many years before, but the dampness had penetrated them, and they were decaying and leaning against the bank. It was now roofless. On the lower side stood a maple, whose ample height and spread of branches made it magnificent. A broad board partly covered the little stream that flowed out, and I used to watch the water curling in the faintest ripples over the pure gravel, and follow it in its devious journey through the black, sluggish creek, into which it fell a few feet below; through the great lake that next received it; down the falls of Niagara, and thus out to the vast ocean, the mere thought of which gave me a pleasant sort of sickness, from excess of feeling, as one enjoys the delightful pain of a tragedy.

One of my holiday occupations was to watch a pan of cream placed in this little current for cooling. It generally remained

several hours, and while I sat beside it, I had liberty to read, or think, or dream. What sweet days of freedom and growth were those! No other time was permitted me for reading, save aloud for the convenience of others; and as the long, sunny hours rolled by, and the shadow of the great tree swept round from before the door, so as to lie due north on the clear, cool water, and the cattle gathered to the creek to bathe their feet in it, and enjoy the shade of the trees upon its margin, I used to feel the soothing influence of the drowsy noontide, and dream myself away into far-off lands of rest and beauty, where only gentle and persuasive spirits held power. Sometimes a great panting frog, leaping into the water, startled me from my reverie, and sometimes a ruder awakening came, in the shrill tones and harsh words which were always ready; which no attention could avert, no alacrity purchase exemption from.

Then my charge was removed, and the penalty exacted for my few hours of tranquillity. Multiplied tasks, voluble denunciations; sharp, exacting commands were laid upon me without stint. I was always pronounced lazy, for having spent the morning sitting by the spring, though I had been commanded to do it, and I was expected to accomplish many times more than my usual labor, for the rest I had enjoyed. But I had a fund of patience under all. I could bear a great deal of unreasonable exaction, because while my hands were employed on the irksome tasks, I myself was far away; and if I were rudely recalled, I bore the reproaches and abuse, silently, for the most part, because they seemed so insignificant an atom in the great world filled with beautiful and good things. Were there not the meadows, and the creek, and the woods, and the plum-trees, and the nut-trees, and the cows—always a great resource to me—and should I not directly escape to some of them?

Beyond the creek, beyond the meadows, through a wide pasture-field, bordered by a thick western wood, was a blackberry

patch. It was my favorite resort in the season of its fruit. I was fond of the great, luscious berries, but still better did I like the deep solitude of the place in which they grew. With my basket on my arm, I walked down the devious, wild path that run along the face of the bank to the ford, or sometimes I took my canoe from near the spring, and paddled myself across. Beyond the large meadow where the creek turned, there rose a high bank, perpendicular, and wooded on its summit. From this the whole farm could be seen; the herds of cattle, the flocks of sheep, the great barn with its open doors, which I looked right through—the stacks around it; the orchard and the plum thicket just at my feet by the water side; the neighboring farms on both hands, the loaded wagons in the fields, and the groups of haymakers. What a picture it was! On the very verge of the high bank stood a large sugar maple, whose trunk, after rising some five feet from the ground, bent itself suddenly downward again, and shot along horizontally, my full length at least. It was a magnificent couch! Not a single fleck of the afternoon sunshine could reach me there, and the rest was so entire, the place seemed so sacred, the work so far away, that I felt myself sole monarch. I never disclosed the charm of this spot to anybody. When Betsey was berrying with me I avoided it. When Mr. Radford got rare permission for me to take a walk with him, I refrained from all mention of it. One day, when I was sitting on the tree, looking solemnly over the scene, I was startled by the rustle of a footstep, and looking up I was frightened, almost terrified at the sight of a man, a stranger, whom I only recognized, from having seen him at a distance once or twice before. He was a man of middle height and size, with a red face, flattened features, and very small eyes. His lips were spotted, and though he was well dressed, he had an appearance that suggested to me something very wrong. I shrunk from him, and would have fled without speaking, but he addressed me kindly, though in an indistinct voice, and said:

"Don't be afraid of me, little girl. I will not hurt you ; I like little girls."

"Don't you like women, too, sir?" I said, half timidly, lingering at his bidding.

He smiled, but looked a little redder than before, and said something which I did not understand. In a moment he added :

"Why, what made you ask that question?"

"Because I thought if you liked women, and spoke pleasantly to them as you do to me, you wouldn't burn your wife's clothes, nor break her dishes."

"Damn you, you little brat," said the man, flushing angrily, and piercing me with his little flaming eyes, now rimmed with scarlet, "what do you mean, talking so to me? Who told you such stuff?"

I had seen his wife weep when telling it to my aunt ; but I felt in an instant that she would have to weep again if I said so, and I answered, what was also true, that I had heard aunt speak of his doing such things.

"Your aunt is a d—d old hag, and had better hold her tongue than talk of me or what I do. Tell her so, will you?"

"I shouldn't like to," I replied, "for she gets very angry sometimes, and speaks almost as badly as you do now."

By this time I had lost the feeling of timidity with which I first spoke to him. What I had heard of him had made me feel a keen interest to know the mystery of his bad deeds. A certain courage and self-possession, such as I had often felt before, came into my bosom, and I advanced a little towards him. The movement attracted a kindlier glance than the last had been ; and when I had stood silent a moment, I said, looking earnestly into his eyes, "You didn't always burn clothes and break dishes. What makes you do it now?"

He flashed down upon me with the angry look again, but my steady regard checked the rough reply, and he said, "That's a fact, child. I didn't always."

I laid my hand lightly on his knee, by way of repeating my question.

"Why do I do it now? Because I get drunk first."

"Isn't that very bad!" I asked; for I did not then know just what it meant.

"Yes; it's very bad—very bad, indeed! But I do it because the doctors told me to drink, in the first place, and now I've got used to it."

"Did it make you well, sir?" I said. "I should think you would have to work very hard to get the clothes and dishes again."

"My wife does that," he said. "She is well, and has plenty of money."

"Yes. I saw aunt give her a great deal for making uncle a coat, the other day. But if she gets new dishes and new clothes, you wouldn't break and burn them again, would you?—because you say it is very bad; and I am sure your wife feels dreadfully when you do it, for she is always good."

I was looking steadily at him, hoping he would promise what I asked; but he smiled at me and said, "They say you are the oldest-fashioned child that ever was, and so you are. Why don't you go and romp and play, like other little girls, instead of sitting about in such places alone, and talking to old folks like me?"

"I don't have time to play," I said; "and when I am at work or resting, I often think of many things it would be good to do."

"And so you thought it would be good to get me to promise not to drink any more, eh?"

"I thought so, when you said it was very bad; for I am sure you don't want to do that."

"No, I don't want to; but you see I do it, any how; and I expect I shall keep on."

"Oh, don't, sir!" I said. And I could have cried myself; for I remembered poor Mrs. Rumsey's tearful face and her bitter sobbing.

"Well, shake hands, little girl. They're getting up some new-fashioned societies now—temperance societies, they call them. You'll do for one of them, but I'm afraid I never shall. However, we'll always be friends," he added, lightly squeezing my hand in his. "Come to our house, sometimes. I like to talk to you, and my wife thinks a deal of you."

He was moving away, but he turned and said, "Your aunt, as you call her, does almost as bad as I do, sometimes, don't she? She is not good to you. Wouldn't you like to come and live with us?"

"I should like to live with your wife," I said.

"Not with me, eh? Well, perhaps that's not strange. But let us be friends, any how. Good bye."

When I reached home that evening I wanted to talk to Mr. Radford. I wished to turn that leaf quite over, and understand both pages. It was moonlight and warm. The owls were abroad in the trees, and the well-filled cows ruminated and groaned as they laid themselves down in the farmyard adjoining that of the house. When the supper things were washed, I walked up to Mr. Radford, who stood near the door, and put my hand into his.

"What, Dolly? What is it now?" he inquired.

"I want to ask you something," I said, "but not here. Come away, please. If aunt hears me she will be angry and call me a fool, as she always does when I speak of such things."

We walked to a plum-tree at the end of the yard, and I said, "When I was after blackberries to-day, Mr. Rumsey came where I was."

"Thunder and lightning!" he exclaimed, with a start. "Did he frighten you?"

"At first I was frightened; but we got to talking, and then I wasn't afraid of him."

"He wasn't drunk, then?"

"I don't know what drunk is," I said; "but his eyes are so queer. Are they drunk?"

"Generally, I suppose, they are. What did he say to you?"

"He said he liked little girls, and asked me to stop and speak with him; and then he called me a damned little brat, for asking him why he burned the clothes and broke the dishes."

"O Dolly, Dolly!" exclaimed my friend, with sudden and irrepressible mirth, holding his sides and doubling himself down. "Dolly, you'll be the death of me some day!"

I was silent from perplexity and wonder.

"To think," he added, after a hearty but silent laugh, "of your asking him that! There isn't a man in the country would dare do it. The hair would be cursed off his head. I wonder he didn't bite you, or frighten you into an ague. Come, tell me all about it."

I related as well as I could what had passed.

"I hope you didn't tell him that his wife said he had done those bad things, as you call them."

"No," I said quickly; "for I was afraid it might make him angry at her. But now I want to know, Mr. Radford, what Mr. Rumsey does to make himself so bad. He did not seem bad to-day."

"He drinks whisky—the whisky they make at Edwards's—and that makes him crazy."

"What does he drink it for?"

"Because he likes it, of course."

"But does it do him any good?"

"No, faith, you may be sure of that."

"I don't understand," I said, "how it can be. If it hurts him, I cannot think why he should drink of it."

"For the same reason, Dolly, that you eat sugar, though I have told you many times it will destroy your teeth."

"But if I really believed it would, I would not eat another morsel; and he knows how bad this makes him, for he said so."

"But he drinks it for all that, just as you eat the sugar; and before you are a woman, your teeth will be all out of your mouth."

I felt annoyed at the repetition of the illustration, though it gave me light. After thinking a moment, I said, "What does Squire Edwards make whisky for, if it's so bad for folks who drink it?"

"Because they give him money for it."

"Then," I said, "I shall talk to Rosanna and Luther about it the very first time I see them."

"Oh," laughed Mr. Radford again, with another of his doubling-up movements, "going to have the distillery stopped, are we? Thunder and lightning, Dolly, but you'll make a rare one, some day! Stop a minute," he said, "as I was walking toward the house. "Tell me, will you, what you are going to say to Rosanna and Luther?"

"I can't tell you everything now," I replied, "because I can't think of it; but when I see them I shall think of a great deal, and I shall say that it is very bad, and their father ought not to do it. Mrs. Rumsey has a great deal of trouble, and he ought to think of that."

"Well, you tell him, Dolly, will you?" said my careless Mentor. "He'll stop, I think, if you do."

CHAPTER IV.

"Then methought I heard a mellow sound
Gathering up from all the lower ground."

The Edwards family was the *élite* of our rustic neighborhood. It was a large one. There were grandparents, children, and grandchildren innumerable; but the particular branch I had to deal with, was a man who had nine children, of whom the oldest daughter and her young brother were, in a sort, patrons of mine. They were rather finer than Betsey. Their father was a

military man and a magistrate; he had a few books, but as they were chiefly on military tactics and law, they did not interest me, though whenever I was in their house, I could not help picking them up and searching for any little *live* passage which might have escaped me before. Squire Jackson himself did sometimes descend to a few phrases with me. He seemed a good-natured and superior man to me, probably from a certain easy and assured manner, which few of the persons I saw possessed.

Their house was a log cabin of some pretensions in size and style. There was a children's room, in which, on the rare occasions of my visits with uncle and aunt, I spent the evening sitting with the older children, while the younger ones slept in the same apartment. Rosanna, and Luther, and Marcia, were all rather grave children—at least not boisterous. They liked me to visit them, and though two of them were older than myself, we all seemed to be companions. Luther was quiet and studious; but he appeared to learn whatever he did either from vanity or curiosity. He told me many things I had no other means of finding out; but when, occasionally, I made deductions from his facts, and said, then if that is so, something else must be so, he would look mildly at me, and invariably answer, "I don't know; I haven't thought of that."

A heavy forest advanced quite to the garden fence in the rear of their house, and when the winter snows melted away, and the spring rains fell, the low places were filled with water, which was alive with frogs. Their piping enchanted me. At that season it was delightful to visit the Edwards's, and I cared little for the books, the children, the nuts, or anything but the invisible and tireless orchestra of the woods. The children would look with a kind of demure slyness at each other, when they saw me station myself in the door, if it were not too cold to have it open, but they never ridiculed me.

One evening, when Marcia and I were alone for a little while, she said:

"Mother is in one of her bad humors to-night."

"Does *she* get very angry, too?" I asked in astonishment, for my notion of bad tempers was represented by tornadoes and tempests that stirred everything around them. I expected at every breath to hear the first peal from the adjoining room.

"*Oh, no!* she doesn't get angry like your aunt. She thinks none of us love her, and says father never gets her anything she wants, and she looks very unhappy; but she never talks angrily, like your mother."

"She is not my mother," I said; "don't call her so, or I shall be angry at you. But your mother always looks unhappy when I see her. What makes her?"

Marcia looked around and behind her, in a manner to prepare me for a terrible disclosure, and bending her head forward, she said in a whisper, "Rosanna and Luther, and I, think it's *tea!*"

"Tea!" I repeated, and the whole surface of my body was chilled by the solemnity of the confidence. "How can tea make her unhappy?"

"It isn't that," said the child, "it's because she can't get it."

Like the sugar and the whisky, I thought, with a kind of discouragement stealing over me.

"Father says," continued the girl, "that he cannot always get enough for her, and as soon as it's gone she looks and talks as she does to-night; and then the baby gets cross, and after a day or two, father goes off and brings her some."

"And does she get better then?" I asked.

"Oh, yes. She is pleasant right away, and all of us feel better, too."

"Well," I said, "that is so curious! Now, Mr. Rumsey is always pleasant and kind when he don't drink whisky. At least I think so, because when he does drink it he does such dreadful things. I don't see why having it should make him so bad, when tea makes your mother so pleasant."

"Oh," said Marcia, with a bright, knowing laugh, "tea is not

the same as whisky, by a great deal. My father makes whisky, you know, in the 'still,' but he can't make tea."

"Why does he make it when it makes Mr. Rumsey behave so dreadfully? Do you know," I whispered, "what terrible things he does after he drinks it? he burns up his wife's clothes, and breaks the dishes." I expected to see a look of horror and indignation on her face, answering to my own, but she smiled a common, little smile of indifference, and said "yes, I know it."

"And does your father know it, too?" I asked with rising indignation.

"Oh, yes," she replied, "everybody knows it."

"Well, then," I said, "I should think your father would not make it for him; I wouldn't for anything, would you?"

"Oh, everybody buys whisky that wants it, and has got money or something else to pay for it with." At this moment her brother came in, and while I sat in a painful state of disappointment at her indifference, she told him in a careless way what we had been talking about, and she concluded, laughingly, "Lizzie says she shouldn't think father would make whisky for Rumsey." The boy turned his fireless eyes to me, partly it appeared in question, partly in amusement at the idea.

"Well, I shouldn't," I said stoutly, warming; "I don't think it's good in him, any how, and if I were you, Luther, I should talk to him about it." He smiled broadly, but expressed just what his sister had. "Well," I said, finding myself entirely baffled, "I never saw people that wouldn't think of such things, when they knew how bad they were."

It was my first temperance crusade, and I could not think it possible that any other persons would have been so indifferent as they were. My indignation, however, was soon forgotten in a game of blind man's buff, in which my activity enabled me to elude my pursuers so successfully, that at last they protested. "I should never get the handkerchief on," they said, "unless one of them could see a little to catch me." So when Rosanna, who was a little fat, and very good natured, had been wholly blinded

of one eye, and partly of the other, there was another flying race, and skipping of chair and beds, and I was caught.

"Children," said Squire Edwards, mildly, stepping into the room and closing the door after him carefully, "don't play too hard. You know, Rosanna, your mother isn't well to-night."

"I know she wants some tea," said the girl, *sotto voce*, as the door closed after him. Dear, dear, I thought, how curious. We can't play blind man's buff heartily because Mrs. Edwards wants tea. I must ask Mr. Radford about it. But Mr. Radford was either not clear-headed, or patient enough, to unfold the difficulties in which I was involved. He laughed at my questions; called Mrs. E. by some irreverent names; amused himself with my account of the remonstrance about the whisky; and ended with a remark which was often made to me, and which always discouraged and perplexed me. Speaking of the indifference of the little Edwardses to what excited me so much, he said, "Ah, Dolly, those children know a great many things that you don't."

"Do you mean," I said, ready to cry, with the vexation that oft-repeated saying caused me, "do you mean what aunt always says, that I am a fool?"

"No, indeed, Dolly," he replied, kindly; "very far from it, I should say; but you see there are many things you don't understand as well as other children do, and it makes me laugh sometimes, to see how you try to find out what you want to know; that's all. Don't cry."

CHAPTER V.

"All good and guiltless as thou art,
Some bitter griefs will touch thy heart—
Griefs that along thy altered face,
Will breathe a more subduing grace,
Than e'en those looks of joy that lie
On the soft face of infancy."

Thus I had but little of the hearty, careless, child-life that belonged to my years. I romped sometimes by moonlight with the dog ; I loved and nursed my poultry, and, if I could get alone with kittens or lambs, I could laugh till the fields or the barns rung with my merriment. I had the spirit that belonged to my age, and an intense capacity for enjoying childish pleasures, but I had another phase of the human nature that, when I lacked these, threw me back upon thoughts and questionings of years older than mine. Had I loved, and been beloved by any tender, intuitive person, I should have speculated less, but I could be content to let no striking phenomena pass without hunting out their cause. Broken dishes and burnt clothing, racked nerves, and pining spirits moved me to inquiry ; and so I was called old-fashioned, queer, foolish, and, in the passionate language I heard every day, a fool. With all my native mirthfulness, I was often very sad. There was a great sorrow and darkness that overshadowed me, about which I could never speak. Even Mr. Radford, who shared all my confidences as to external facts, could not be trusted with this. And yet, I half doubted sometimes, if he did not know it—the fact, not my feeling about it. I used to hear words sometimes in the conversations between my aunt and her visitors, that deepened and widened this shadow fearfully—words importing mystery, sus-

picions, and foul imputations that made my heart stand still, or beat in a vague kind of wild terror. These words directly referred to my father and mother. For my mother I had a very strong sentiment of reverence, made tenderer by a pity, which, from some source, I did not know what, had crept into my memory of her. My recollections were chiefly of her sufferings in her last illness, and on her death-bed. But from casual expressions and half-uttered sentences, which had graven themselves, as in letters of undying flame, upon my heart, I had learned the fact of her having been oppressed and wronged by my father and a woman, whom I remember as having been much with us after she was gone. Once the horrible conjecture fell on my ears, that her early death was, perhaps, hastened by neglect, and the dreadful presence of this person in her own home. My father still lived, but it would be difficult to tell what my feelings towards him were at that time. I had a reverential respect for the name of father. The relation singled him out from all the world to me, and some of the deepest wretchedness of those years of bondage, was that I suffered in trying to reconcile the veneration I felt for him as parent, with the detestation I entertained for him as man. O dissolute fathers! be warned. Winter nights and summer nights, bright days and dark days, I used to spend hours, in vain attempts to settle this harrowing question. If I could have spoken to any earnest, loving soul, the relief would have been inestimable. But the individuals from whom, in broken fragments and at long intervals, I picked up what I knew, were those to whom I would not have disclosed my fearful secret for worlds, and I was longing and pining more than ever for love and sympathy, when a letter came for me from my young sister at home. She was older than myself by two years and a half, had been at school, wrote well, and said she loved me very dearly, and wished to see me. How the condescension charmed me! How the attention lifted me up! So wise, and write to me—so much in the great, full world, and yet actually think, as she said, so often and

much of me—a dark, frowsy, ragged child, who was so ignorant and foolish. When I thought it all over, I was so much moved that I had to run away to the great, solemn, black walnut in the little meadow, and have a melting cry over it. I could read it myself, and write a little too, for though prohibited every means of improvement, I did manage, with the help of sheets of paper and ink, from my friend Albert, and copies by Mr. Radford now and then, to scrawl a little by stealth; and though sometimes I was detected and punished, I was never deterred from seizing the next opportunity. Thus I lost nothing of the little I had learned before leaving home, but I had added little to it. I wrote a letter, but it had to be approved, and, in the exultation consequent on so momentous a performance, I called Mr. Radford into the low chamber over the kitchen, where I had cleared a space by the four-paned sash, and written, with the paper lying on an old barrel-head upon the floor. He came, crawling along, muttering something that I did not attend to. When he saw the writing materials, he said: "Oh, it's the letter, is it, Dolly? Do you want to know how to spell a word?"

"No, sir," I said, with dignity, "I can spell every word, but I want to read this letter to you, and you tell me, please, if there is anything wrong, will you?" He smiled, and I set off.

"Sh! sh!" and his hand came pretty firmly over my lips, "not so loud, child. If the old woman heard that, what would she say? Do you think she will send a letter that says she is a bad woman, and gets so very angry that she is sometimes like the foolish Joe who used to frighten you when you were little girls? Little girls, indeed! What else are you now, I should like to know? Your sister must be bigger than you are, or both of you'd be put in a gallon measure."

"But, Mr. Radford," I said, altogether crest-fallen and comfortless at this criticism, "won't the letter do? You haven't heard it either."

"The letter, so far, would do very well, for it's true as gospel; but it can't go, don't you see, because it must please the aunt,

and it's not likely that what you've said will do that. But let me hear the rest of it."

I went on to the close.

"Well, child, you do astonish me," he said. "I wish that letter could go, the more that you've given me so good a name in it; but it can't: so you'll have to write another."

"How?"

"Why, that's the puzzle. You see you can't write the truth, and"——

"And I won't write a lie, if I never send a line," said I bursting into tears. "I won't say she is good and kind, and that I love her; because she is not, and I don't love her, and she hates me. And if I can't write that, I won't write at all," I said, tearing the sheet to fragments. But then I thought of my sister, and of how I should like to tell her of my life, and get other letters from her; and my vexation gave place to a feeling of pure pain—a genuine heart-ache. "Oh dear," I said, the tears raining into my lap, "what shall I do?" After a moment's silence, Mr. Radford said, "Come out and take a walk with me; we will go down to the chestnut-tree. I think the burs are beginning to open, and maybe we can find some nuts on the ground." I rose to go out, but Mr. Radford stayed back till I had stepped through the low door into the large chamber. When he came out, he had the fragments of paper in his hand.

"I thought," he said, "it was better not to leave these to be picked up, and read, or you might get some hard blows, and I'd like to save you them if I could, poor Dolly."

I choked and swelled all the way down stairs in silence, and then I said, "Don't say that again, Mr. Radford, or I shall cry, I can't help it."

It was a glorious autumn evening, yet an hour to sunset, but the air began to grow chill, and my blood to rise to quick motion, as soon as I was out on the turf, with the winds and the birds about me, and the sky above. When we reached the top of the hill that looked down into the little

valley at the head of the large meadow, where the chestnut tree stood, I could no longer keep Mr. Radford's measured pace. I let go his hand, and darted away, as he said, when he came to the tree, "like a swallow."

With diligent search and some pelting of the lower branches, we found a very few nuts. But the more serious purpose was fully attained of cheating me of my present sorrow. The evening wind, rustling the broad leaves, seemed like electric fire to my young nerves. I ran, bounded, leaped, pelted Mr. Radford with burs, and laughed at his make-believe distress. When I had expended my excitement, in a measure, I stood more quietly aside to watch the sticks and stones which, hurled by his strong arm, reached a height that surprised me. The dark tree-top stood out clear against the flame-colored sky, and the fluttering leaves that bordered it seemed actually to dip themselves in the warm light that overflowed the west. The spectacle quieted me at once. It reminded me of thoughts I had entertained a long time before, as it seemed to me. My companion, perceiving that my gaiety had subsided, came toward me, and said, "Come, Dolly, now let us gather the chestnuts, for we must be going."

But I no longer cared for the nuts. "Mr. Radford," I said, "look at the tree from this side—come here." He looked doubtful and moved slowly nearer.

"I don't want you, Dolly"—he began. But I interrupted him, saying, "Don't you see how near the branches are to the sky? When I was a little girl, a long time ago, at school with Mary, we used to see high trees that reached almost to the sky, and we thought a tall man could climb to the tops of them and step right up into Heaven. Did you ever see any such when you were a little boy?"

"I don't know, Dolly," he replied. "It's a long time ago that I was a little boy, and I suppose I have forgotten a great deal that I used to think of then. But don't you go to getting old, talking about such things again. Come and pick up the

chestnuts I have knocked down. "It is time we were going home, I say."

I was very reluctant. A beautiful dream of the olden time was coming over me, and memories of days when, it seemed, looking back upon them from that life-stirring evening, that I had been wholly happy, surrounded by love. I should have cried in a moment, but Mr. Radford took my hand and raised me to my feet.

"Dolly," he said, "don't you cry again;" and he began to be funny, as was his wont occasionally. "I've thrown my arm almost off to knock down some nuts for you to gather, and I've strained my eyes up so far to see them, that I can hardly look down to the ground again, and now you begin to be as solemn and old-womanish as ever, and tell me about a *long time ago* when you were a *little girl* (he had a peculiar way of drawing out those words that made me feel myself a mere atom—a dust speck in his eyes), and you look as if you'd cry again in a minute. Don't do it, I say, but come here and look at these great fellows lying so snug and warm side by side tucked in, in that thick blanket."

I began to feel cheered again, and I said, "If I should cry, Mr. Radford, it would not be such a cry as that was before, for I should cry now from remembering how happy I used to be at home. That don't hurt me; but when I cried at the house it was because I was so unhappy here."

"Well, I don't see much difference," he said, "for my part; but don't let's have any more of either."

We walked homeward, and the wildness of the evening, for it was now sunset, and a brisk, hollow-sounding breeze which flew over the dark green earth and rustled the sear leaves of the trees as we passed, seemed to carry my thoughts away over immense spaces. The lakes—the great rivers I had read of—the ocean—the vast forests, filled with birds and animals—the deserts, so solemn and endless, where camels and elephants could live, but nothing else, as I thought—away I went careering over

these, in a freedom as absolute as that of the wind itself. As we ascended the hill, the frosted orchard, and the yellow cornfield before the house, with its great piles of golden grain, and the distant, mysterious chime of the waters of the lake, which I often heard on such evenings, seemed to me all so very beautiful and comforting that I thought no more for the time of my sorrows.

Mr. Radford had told me often of great flights of pigeons that came over in the fall of some years, to the beech forest which bordered the lake—so many, he said, that they darkened the day and sometimes you couldn't see the sky at all, not even a little piece of it, for hours. I wondered, in an ecstasy at the thought, and believed every word he said, and yet, I somehow always thought if they came, as he said they would be sure to again, when the beech trees bore a great many nuts, that I should be able to see a little patch of sky, even on the days when they flew most thickly.

This beech forest was a grand place to me. Its trees were tall and symmetrical, and closely set, and the undergrowth of mandrake vines and small light shrubs was so exquisitely beautiful. And then, I always thought when walking in its dim religious aisles, of the great lake which washed its other border, and of the very long time that had gone over them, for Mr. Radford told me that the trees were three or four hundred years old. And I used to think with awe of the dark, wild autumn storms, and how many times they had stripped the straining branches; and of the winter snows that had whitened and bent them.

CHAPTER VI.

"Questions, questions! Our life is a question
Put too high or low. The Sphynx
Standeth by the wayside ever.
The doubting spirit weareth a dagger."

Away in the heart of this forest lived a woman whom I loved better than any female who was known to me there. She was a niece of my adopted father; young, strong, energetic and faithful, and so kind of heart that I felt always a certain freedom with her that no other presence gave me. She had a lazy, thriftless husband, and seven children, whom she supported by ceaseless industry, and yet she was always cheerful. Her presence seemed to invigorate and sharpen me. I did not dream so much with her, though I never confided to her my inner life. She interested me because, although she would not compare with Mr. Radford in point of intelligence, and very, very often said, "Don't know," or "La, child, what a strange question!" to what I asked her, yet she met me more satisfactorily through her earnestness and motherly tenderness. She never bantered or put me away, as he often did, with light raillery, which I felt, though not always painfully from him.

Mrs. Peterson was of middling size; she must have had originally a fair complexion, but it was slightly browned by the intense activity of her life, in doors and out. Her whole physical being seemed to have toughened under her tasks. One never felt a sense of weariness in seeing her at the hardest work, for she did it with corporeal ease, and such hearty consent of the spirit that it seemed an enjoyment to her. Her husband was a man who sat long at table, and when he left it, removed himself carefully to the fireside in winter, or just without the door in

summer. He also smoked, but I never saw him doing it without feeling more than at any other time, the immense difference between him and uncle. They were even farther separated in their enjoyments than their labors.

Mr. Peterson was of a dirty grey complexion, with coarse, brown hair, that hung uncared for on each side of his dull, easy-looking face. His hands were rarely clean, though his clothes were always so; but that was the merit of his good wife, who used to say briskly, never ill-naturedly, that she would always wash his clothes, but she would not wash him. Mr. Peterson was a person whom I never remembered till I saw him. He always surprised me when he came in, for I forgot till that moment that he was anywhere; but I had too much delicacy not to try to conceal this from his wife. Of his oldest daughter, however, who was a coarse girl, like him, I did not feel so considerate. She, too, was good-natured and dull, except in the gratification of her lowest appetites, and she appeared never to think of anything, nor learn anything, nor wish for anything, that was not entirely for herself. Therefore I had a positive dislike of her, which her father could never rouse me to feel toward him.

One day when I had stood a long time by her mother's loom, watching the slow growth of the web in it, as the shuttle flew back and forth, he surprised me, as usual, by coming in. I was afraid Mrs. Peterson would see it in my face, so I said hastily, "Oh, Mr. Peterson, have you finished my shoes yet? I want them very much."

"No, Tonny," he said, for he took the liberty, in his sublime laziness, of calling me by a name which I did not like, and which, with everybody else, I had nearly outgrown. "No, they ain't done yet, but you shall have them next week."

I was on the point of asking Mrs. Peterson to tell her husband not to call me by that name, which she, with her mother's instinct, never used, and thinking that if he did it again I shouldn't forget him so easily as I had, when the girl, Rhoda,

called me to the door, to see her *love apples* (tomatoes). While we were stepping about the plant, admiring its crimson fruit, and I was learning from her that it was dreadfully "pison," though nothing that she ever said made any impression on me, I remarked, "Isn't it droll I always forget when I come to your house, that your father is here at all; and it seems so funny, when he comes in, that I haven't thought of him! What's the reason?"

"I'm sure I don't know," was the reply; and after a moment laughing a little unmeaning laugh, she said, "I guess we all feel a little so, somehow or other."

I did not speak in answer, but I thought, "I shall ask Mr. Radford what kind of a man Mr. Peterson is, and then I shall know all about it."

Mrs. Peterson had twin sons—handsome, jolly-looking babies. I remember them—an inexplicable mystery to me, which I was only restrained from questioning Mr. Radford upon, by my intense dread of his downright, doubling-up laugh. And an older son she had, her second child, who was an object of my unmitigated detestation. There was something in his low, coarse manner from which I shrunk instinctively, with a terror almost. Once, when I had expressed my disgust and dread to Mr. Radford, he replied, with an earnestness quite unusual to him, "Yes; he's a bad boy, Dolly, and I advise you not to speak to him, nor let him speak to you, if you can help it. Mind, I advise you so."

I would as soon have ventured into a lion's cage after that caution. Indeed, for a long time the boy inspired me with a perfect dread. His very laugh, even in presence of his mother and sisters, silenced me; and a direct address from him would send me edging round behind the loom or into his mother's seat, with an uneasy feeling that I could not quiet till I had got very close to her.

One day, when I had watched Mrs. Peterson a long time at the weaving, which it seemed to me never stopped, I said, while

she was joining a broken thread, "What a great deal of cloth you must have made since you were big enough to weave!"

"Yes; a good deal."

"But not enough, though, for all the people about here wear."

"Oh, no."

"Who makes the rest?"

"Miss Weber weaves, and Miss Griffin."

These were both mothers, like herself; but she spared herself the trouble of the distinguishing syllable that would have indicated their social ties.

"Do you think," I asked, "that all of you together weave enough?"

"La! no, child."

"Well, where does the rest come from? Where does all the cloth come from that all the people in the world wear?"

"Now, there, you see! That's what I've often told Uncle John and Aunt Phebe—you ask so many strange questions. But I can't answer that one, for I don't know myself. It's made somewhere, certainly, but I don't know where."

"Does Mr. Radford know, do you think?"

"I guess he does know something about it."

"What a dreadful thing it would be if a great many of the looms should be broken or burnt up at once!" I said, as much to my own thought as to her.

"Yes, it would be bad enough; but it aint very likely to happen, I guess."

When I addressed Mr. Radford on this question, he informed me that, as well as he knew, most of the cloth worn in the world was manufactured in England; explained the difficulty of so small a country containing so many looms, by the fact that two of their looms would not occupy more room than Mrs. Peterson's one, and would make eight or ten times as much cloth.

"And are the English women as good weavers?" I inquired.

"It is not women, Dolly, that weave in those looms, I think. But I don't very well understand all this myself. I'll show you a gentleman, sometime, who came from England, and who can tell you all about it, and many other things that you want to know."

"Who is he?" I asked.

"It is Mr. Fleming. He was here the other day, but not in the house."

"Did he weave cloth in England?"

"No; he was an officer—a lieutenant in the navy."

"Dear me!" I was quite breathless—almost afraid to think of speaking to a man who had fired broadsides, and knocked ships full of holes, and killed people, as I firmly believed every officer must have, in the wars I had read and heard of. Whenever I thought of him, it was as a fearful man, with a large sword hanging on one side, and sabre and pistols on the other; and dimly I suspected there would be a cannon following after him. I begged Mr. Radford to speak to him for me, and tell him what I wished to know. "But," I said, "you mustn't let aunt hear you; for she would be very angry and tell him I was a fool."

"I think he'd soon find out you were not, Dolly; and so will she, too, some day, or I'm mistaken."

The earnest way in which he spoke encouraged me to a bold question. It was one which had caused me many an hour of anxious debate with myself. "Mr. Radford," I said, looking, not at, but into him, "do you think I am a foolish child?"

"No, Dolly—not foolish."

The tone and the pause before the last word so qualified the answer, that my heart, which had bounded with hope, seemed turned to lead. Tears, which I could not repress, sprung into my eyes and overflowed.

"Dolly," he said, very kindly, "what does that mean?"

"Oh Mr. Radford," I sobbed, so brokenly that he bent close down to understand, "aunt always tells me I am a fool, and I'm afraid I am."

"Haven't I just told you that you are not?"

"Yes; but you didn't say it in the right way. I don't know but you think I am partly one. Do you?"

"Why, you see, Dolly," he began, "you are not like other children. You're a little strange, certainly; and though I don't think you a fool, nor foolish either, if you will have me say so, yet I can't tell just why I don't think so, when she says you are. The fact is, you often puzzle me, and I don't know exactly what to make of you. Sometimes I think you're a thundering smart little girl, and then again I don't know what you are."

I heard this long opinion in dismay, which increased at every word. I had revolved this question secretly in my own mind for hours, by day and night. In the cold winter I slept in a large room and a large bed, with nothing living near me, except Old Tom, my cat, who always lay inside at my feet. I could not read much in those nights, even when I had a book, and a bit of candle, and was not afraid of aunt's stealing in to detect me, which she sometimes did. When my hands got very cold, I would put my light out, and lie and think on the various questions, painful and pleasant, that were locked up in my little bosom, and this was the absorbing one of them all. If I were really a fool, then all my dreams and visions of Doing must vanish away; for a fool, I knew, was a person who could do nothing—whom bad people laughed at, and good ones pitied. How terrible it was to think, as I did sometimes, that I should see people shrink from me, and wish not to speak to me! For, in my states of deepest discouragement—which, however, were rare, thanks to that undying, unslumbering consciousness which no oppression can fully extinguish in the nature that is clothed with power to individualize itself—I had a dim foreshadowing of some month, or week, or day, or hour, when the fact would become palpable—when everybody would recognize me for the thing I had been so often called, and in my mind I dramatized the whole agonizing scene, and saw myself dismissed from the presence of the actors on my stage, marked beyond the possibility of mistake.

In other times I endeavored to help myself to a solution of my great difficulty, by comparing myself with the children whom I knew. I was conscious of thoughts to which they never responded, but I had no means of knowing that this difference was not the chief proof of the assertion I wished to refute. Certainly my young companions knew, as Mr. Radford said, a great deal of which I was entirely ignorant; and this, I had to confess, was clearly against me. And when I said anything to them on the subjects which interested me so much, there seemed to be an intelligence among them by which they accounted for the strangeness of my thoughts and speech. A look, a slight laugh, an exclamation, such as, "What a queer thing you are!" "How old-fashioned you are!" or the partial assent to what appeared to be in other minds an admitted statement, "Well, I believe you really are foolish," or the open, coarse assertion that I was, weighed me down sorely.

I would have given—oh, what would I not have given, for communion with some clear-seeing, gentle person, who would have lifted this cloud from my life! After Mr. Radford's opinion, I felt more timid than ever about it, but also more earnest to have it settled. It seemed to grow into a sudden necessity. I had entered my tenth year. For want of any proper child's reading, I was devouring Congressional debates, political newspapers, cabinet reports, and Presidents' and Governors' messages. I was a repository of a great deal of statistical information with respect to the Navy, the Treasury, the Post-office, and War Departments. I was forming opinions upon tariff and free-trade, upon federal sovereignty and State rights, nullification, internal improvements, and I *must* know whether I had the common sense, as we called it, of children, or not. A day or two after Mr. Radford had given me the equivocal opinion which distressed me so, I found an opportunity to speak to him, unheard, as I thought, by any one.

"Do you think, Mr. Radford," I asked, "that that Mr.

Fleming could tell me what I asked you the other day, about myself?"

"What was that, Dolly?"

He had wholly forgotten what had scarcely been out of my thoughts, and I felt an inexpressible difficulty in getting it before his mind again.

"About my being what aunt says I am," I said, very slowly and painfully—so painfully that some sense of its great magnitude to me seemed, while I was forcing the words out, to penetrate his mind.

"Thunder and lightning!" he exclaimed; "have you been thinking of that ever since?"

"I have been thinking a great deal of it," I replied, "and so would you, I think, if people called you that and you didn't know but it was true."

"Ah! but I should know."

"Yes, because you are a man, and know everything that you want to. But I am not a woman—I am only a little girl, and I cannot tell, myself; and I want to know, and I must know," I added, passionately crying at last.

"Well, Dolly," he replied, "I should say if anything could satisfy me that you were not the least bit foolish, it would be this. If you were, you see," he went on, "you wouldn't be so anxious about it."

But Mr. Radford had lost the power to say a consoling word to me on that subject.

"I didn't ask you, sir, now to talk about that. I want to know if you think Mr. Fleming, when he comes, could tell me—because I would ask him."

Mr. Radford laughed aloud. I was perplexed and hurt. "Dolly," he said, "I laughed to think how you would do it. You can't talk to Mr. Fleming, you know, as you can to me."

The words opened a great gulf before me. I had been two years trying to speak to my friend, and how should I address a stranger, the first time seeing him, on such a subject? I had

never thought of that before. I was silent; and my face, concealed from Mr. Radford, was drenched in tears. Still, as I stood and weighed every difficulty, I *felt*, rather than *thought*, that his being a stranger was, perhaps, a reason why I could more easily speak to him. I revolved it much in my mind that night, sometimes feeling valiant enough to have spoken instantly to any person, and again shrinking in painful timidity from the thought of the utter strangeness of the question, and the wretchedness I suffered when people betrayed how much they were amused by such unusual talk in a child.

CHAPTER VII.

"True heart and hand, whom the defenceless loveth."

In the morning I felt languid and spiritless, and was abused and cuffed proportionably. Mr. Radford walked down towards the spring, and met me toiling up the hill with a pail of water, which he took from me with a quick motion, so expressive of his sympathy, that I could scarcely restrain my ready tears.

"Dolly," he said, "don't fret so, child. You know you are not foolish; and the more I think of it, the more I believe"——

"Don't say anything to me, Mr. Radford," I said, with a violent effort at self-control, "or I shall certainly cry, and then she'll be so very angry."

I was already sore, in body as well as spirit; for recently she had been more than commonly passionate and outbreaking.

"I know it," he said, impatiently; and he muttered some words which, I believe, were profane, about her skin. We reached the door while he was relieving his feelings in this under tone. She, unfortunately, saw him place the pail of water, for which she had sent me; and though he was waiting breakfast, and might therefore as well as not go and fetch it,

his having done it, especially at a time when she chose to be ill-natured, enraged her. I saw the storm coming, and shrunk in terror from its outburst. I dreaded to have Mr. Radford appear as my champion, lest I should lose his protection altogether; and I knew that if attacked, in the mood he was then in, he would not be non-committal. I felt, from his tone and looks, that he at last understood me better than he ever had, and that he was consequently more angered with her.

Places were taken at the table. The coffee was poured in silence; but the storm continued to gather and darken. Uncle was away on business, as he often was; and, as usual, Mr. Radford was in charge. He was an important man; and though modest and quiet, to a degree, he knew his advantage. By the dignity of his position and the easiness of his nature, he had hitherto preserved himself from being embroiled, as every other individual who remained long in the family invariably had been. But now I felt what was coming; and though it was a warm morning in summer, my flesh seemed to become icy. I could not even feign to swallow my food. It would not leave my mouth; nor could I help casting furtive and terrified glances at her. I wished her to imagine me eating my breakfast, and so kept putting small morsels in my mouth (though every particle staid there), not knowing what I was to do with it ultimately. I seemed never to have been so utterly miserable as at that moment. If any one had spoken a word it would have relieved me, but all were silent. Mr. Radford handed his cup, and, as it was returned, I glanced at him, and received, the next instant, a blow on the side of my head, that sent me reeling against the person next me—a day-laborer for the haying.

"Go out doors, thee idiot!—thee little black brat! After breakfast I'll see if thee can't eat and mind thy own business!"

The man whom I had fallen against gave me a little help to regain my equilibrium, and I left the table and dragged my nerveless limbs outside the back door.

"Jacob," she said, speaking to Mr. Radford, as she always

did, by his Christian name—for she adhered in every particular to the language of the sect she had been born in (except her occasional profanity)—"I wish thee to let that young one alone. When I want thee to bring water, I'll ask thee ; but when I send her, I don't want anybody to help her."

I had only passed through the little entry, and stopped upon the door-sill, so that I heard every word.

Mr. Radford was at first prudent. He said, quietly, "I was waiting for breakfast, and the child is not well this morning ; so I thought, when I saw her with the pail, I'd just step down and bring it the rest of the way."

"It's none of thy business if she's well or not," was the fierce reply. "That's for me to take care of. I'll show thee she is well, and can bring as much water as I want, without thy help." Her voice was very angry—much more so than her words ; for she seemed to be under a little restraint in quarrelling with him. "Lizzie," she called in her hardest tone, "pour that pail of water into the gutter, and go and bring another."

I had come into the room at the sound of my name ; and though I was not astonished at the order, yet some spirit, good or evil, prompted me to ask, "Shan't I put it in the kettle?" In fact, I felt so extremely weakened by that time, that it seemed impossible to bring more water. It was always one of my very hardest tasks—the hill was so long and steep, and I was so very small. The little remonstrance I uttered, kindled broad the slumbering flame of passion. She left her seat, seized me by the shoulder, and whirled me through the passage and out of the door, which was a step from the ground, so furiously that when I reached it I could scarcely stand on my feet, and then, lifting the full pail that stood near, she dashed its contents over me. She had often done this ; and though it was intended as a high expression of her anger, it was one that gave me the least pain or sense of outrage. At this time it braced me wonderfully. The water was very cold, and though I felt weak and low, it was not so much from exhaustion as from nervous stag-

nation. The shock brought an instantaneous reaction. My courage rose with my bodily warmth and energy; and when I came up dripping with the second pailful, and she dashed that over me, and sent me for a third, I felt I did not care at all how long she went on doing so. When I reached the house again, there were warm words passing between her and Mr. Radford. I stopped at the outside door, for I was yet very wet, my thin clothing having been as perfectly drenched as if I had fallen into the creek; and, besides, I did not care to provoke a fresh attack. I knew it would come in some form less agreeable than the bath. The first words I heard were from Mr. Radford.

"You say you'll do whatever you please with the child, and I suppose you will if she's got no friends; but I tell you, ma'am, that if she was my sister, or anybody I had a right to take care of, she shouldn't stay an hour longer in your house."

"Thee shan't stay an hour thyself, after John comes home. Mind that!"

"Don't say much of that sort of thing to me, ma'am, or I may not be here when he comes. I think I can do as well without you as you can without me, just now, anyhow."

"I wish thee was in ——," was the fierce reply, accompanied by a quick movement, of which I heard the sound where I sat. "Is she going to strike him?" I thought; for she sometimes had so far forgotten herself towards other men and the boys. I did not stir, and Mr. Radford evidently sat still.

The next words he spoke were a dreadful oath, uttered with a deliberation that made me creep all over. "Don't rise in that threatening manner to me, ma'am. I'm a man, and I won't strike you, but if you were one, I'd knock you down quicker than lightning."

There was a general moving of chairs and rising up. "And I tell you further," he continued, "and I want the men and boys to hear it, I won't have that girl abused as she has been. I'm going to stay here till Mr. Smalley comes home, and don't you whip her, nor knock her about any more while I'm on the

farm. If you do"——he paused. "Come, boys, let's go to the field." They passed out by me, and as he went, he said, in a reasoning, persuasive tone, "Be a good child, Dolly, and I'll take care of you."

"I will," I said thankfully; and though I was extremely doubtful if she would not fall upon me furiously the moment I entered her presence, I had, nevertheless, nerve enough to walk at once into the room, where she was standing by the table. I commenced at the further end to gather the dishes up, and did not look at her after the first glance, but went on with my task. She remained silent some moments, and I began to question whether Mr. Radford's getting angry, and swearing at her had not done good, and whether if her husband, and the other grown persons whom she abused, did so too, it would not be a great deal better, when she said, or rather hissed, "Go along, thee nasty little wretch, and take off thy wet clothes. I've a great mind to break every little bone in thy hateful body; get out of my sight!" and she made a quick motion towards me, from which I darted away into the next room, where my few clothes were kept.

While I was arranging myself in dry garments, I had time to consider the probabilities of the day before me. I knew that if anything could restrain her, it would be the dread of what Mr. Radford had threatened—his leaving. There was a great deal of hay and grain to be cut and gathered. I had seen the season often enough to know how very much it pressed upon every one, and I knew that if Mr. Radford should go away, in uncle's absence, it would be considered a serious calamity. I had never heard him threaten before. He was not a man, I think, who ever used threatening language without fully meaning to do all he said. But although this somewhat reassured me for that day, it quite terrified me for the future. If I lost Mr. Radford, what should I do? In view of that probability, he seemed to me entirely sufficient for all my demands. I forgot his raillery—forgot the many things of which I

could not speak to him—forgot all his shortcomings, and remembered only that he was always kind; that I could always tell him of whatever happened to me externally, and that in quiet ways he did me a great deal of good. I dared not trust myself to think seriously of his going, for it would not do to be tearful or sad that day; so, as briskly and as quickly as I could, I went out to my tasks.

I assumed that her rage had evaporated, and addressed her, when it was necessary, in a natural way, with as much amiability as I could exhibit, towards such a monster as she then seemed. We got through the forenoon without another skirmish; and when I went down to the meadow with luncheon, I reported progress to Mr. Radford, who was in an astonishing state of independence, and who said with satisfaction, after I had told him all, "Hum! Yes; blast her, she'd better carry herself tidily, after offering to strike me!"

As I was starting homeward, Albert followed me a few steps, and said, "Eliza, when we are milking to-night, get one of your cows near mine, if you can. I want to tell you something."

"Yes," I replied, filled with a kind of glad wonder; for I knew from his looks it was nothing bad he had to say.

That the forces might be as strong as possible, the dreadful Peterson boy was there among them; and his presence, which always made me uncomfortable, was not the less disagreeable at that time, when I felt that all the others, however dull or strange to me, were kindly disposed. I was in a sort, coming out, and the presence of one decidedly negative spirit troubled me more than it would have, before the scene in the morning.

When I was going down with the afternoon lunch, he had contrived, upon pretence of getting a drink, to slip away to the bank of the creek, where I had to pass. He sat under the shrubbery that overhung the path, and I did not perceive him till my skirts brushed his knees. When I looked in his face there was something in it that made me speechless—for an instant almost breathless.

"I say, Tonewanta," he said, with his diabolical leer and grin, stretching out his feet at the same moment across the narrow path, and so stopping me, "couldn't you love me as well as you do Albert?"

"Yes, if you were as good a boy, and as kind to me; but you are not, and I hate you. Take away your feet and let me pass."

If I had attempted to step over them, he would have tripped me—he had just that low love of tormenting.

"Oh, don't be in a hurry!" he said, taking hold of my dress; "stop and talk a little."

"If you don't let me go, this instant," I replied, setting down my basket—for I had a pail of milk in one hand and a basket of food in the other—and snatching my frock from his abhorred touch, "I'll scream to Mr. Radford."

"He won't hear you," he said, tauntingly, standing up at the same moment, and putting his arm about my shoulders. He was almost of the stature of a man, and though I was very small and active, and could, unencumbered, have escaped him like a weasel, I never thought for a moment that I could drop my things and run. When he touched my neck, I sent forth a scream that made the little valley ring.

"You little devil, you," he said, removing his hand and raising his foot, as if he would have sent me off the steep bank into the water, "get along! I don't wonder Aunt Phebe beats you. I've a great mind to do it myself."

A dozen steps brought me to the corner, in full view of the workmen, who were, as he had said, a considerable distance away. But they had evidently heard me, for their work was suspended at the moment, and they were all looking about as if expecting something. I walked hastily on, my face blazing, and every drop of my blood seeming to boil in my veins. Mr. Radford was nearest me. I dropped my basket and pail; and, the instant he stood up to speak to me, I seized his arm and drew it about me very tight.

"Why, Dolly!" he exclaimed, "why in the world do you hurry so in this hot day? Has that old Jezebel been"——

"No, no," I said, shaking my head rather than articulating, "not she—Tom Peterson."

"Thunder and lightning!" he exclaimed, almost dashing me upon a bunch of hay near us. "Where is he? Did he stop you on the path?"

I nodded.

"Then," said he, with a dreadful oath, "I'll skin him alive! I'll whip him till he can't stand! Here (to the men), here is luncheon; take it and go on without me. I don't want any. Dolly," he said, "you wait here till I come back." He pulled off his gloves, drew his knife from his pocket, and strode off."

"Is he going to cut his throat?" I thought. But as he passed the chestnut-tree, he stopped and cut a whip—a straight, elastic one that shot up from the root, and then walked hastily on. He disappeared around the corner, and in a few moments the shouts and outcries announced that he was doing his work, and doing it well.

The men looked up from their eating with astonishment. One said hastily, "Where is Tom?" and the question and the noise, and my appearance, seemed to suggest all in an instant.

"That's good," said another; "I hope he'll lather him well."

"He'll do that, you may be sure," said a third, "for he's up to-day anyhow, and he don't love the boy any better than the rest of us do."

"Th-th-th-there ain't another so beow-beow-bero-bad a one in the country," said a fatherly, kind old man, named Eaton, whose frightful impedi ment had amused me irresistibly, till he spoke a few times to me, and then I could never laugh at him.

I did not speak; but in a moment they were all silenced by the boy and man appearing, and coming rapidly towards us. Mr. Radford was behind, and occasionally he raised the whip as if he would have struck, but the boy walked straight forward, and he did not. When they came near, Mr. Radford, though

he was very warm, was as white as a piece of paper. He shook with rage. He paid no attention to the presence of the men, nor did he speak, but with occasional touches of the whip he drove the blubbering wretch to me.

"Now," he said, "pull off that old hat of yours."

It came off.

"Tell Eliza that you are very sorry you stopped her, and spoke to her on the path, and ask her to forgive you."

The speech did not commence at once; up went the whip, but the words came at the moment.

"Promise her and me, now, that you will never open your lips to speak to her again when she is alone."

"I never will."

"Nor when she's with anybody, either, if you can help it."

"I won't."

"Now put on your jacket and go home, and tell your father I've whipped you till you're sore, and I advise him, if he isn't too infernal lazy, to give you another. You young scoundrel, don't show your face here again this summer; and mind, if I hear of you, it must be of your behaving well to her when you see her, or I'll skin you next time."

The boy went off, hanging his head, and Mr. Radford sat down.

"There's a fellow going to the gallows," he said, "or I'm mistaken. Give me a drink, will you? I am very warm."

The men applauded Mr. Radford warmly, though they knew only what they had seen. Mr. Eaton said the boy ought to be "weaw-weaw-weaw-w-w-whipped every day of his life till he behaved better," a course of discipline which my humanity, outraged as I felt, dissented from at once, but I was silent.

"Dolly," said my champion, "if I have one or two more battles to fight for you, I shall become quite a hero, eh? I am getting stirred up considerably," he added, shaking himself, as if he enjoyed the excitement. "I couldn't whip the old woman this morning, but cursing her came next to it in satisfaction; and now she's broken the ice, she can get plenty of it any day. I'm

going to take you in hand from this time, Dolly: you've been abused long enough. Now be a good girl, and you'll see, if I know it, nobody shall hurt you, or treat you ill."

He said it in such a hearty way, and I felt such an entire and grateful reliance on him, that I took his hand from his knee and kissed it. He looked at me a moment with quivering eyelids, compressed his lips, took a long breath, cleared his throat as if he had taken a cold, and said:

"Well, Dolly, I've sent off one hand, and so I must do the work of two."

"What will aunt say?" I asked.

"She be ——. No, I've said enough of that sort to-day, I think—I mean that I don't care what she says. Out of doors I'll do what I think proper. I know Uncle John will say I am right, and I don't care for her what time I shall stay now."

"Oh, dear," I said, keenly pained at his last words, "you are not going away, are you, Mr. Radford? If you do, what will become of me?" I could scarcely restrain my tears.

"I can't talk to you now, Dolly, about that. Sometime before long, I'll tell you something that I'm going to do," he added, with a pleased, happy look, "but not now. Go to the house, child, and don't hurry yourself so much."

"Shall I say anything about" ——

"No, no; I'll manage that."

CHAPTER VIII.

"The hopes, that nurtured in my breast,
Have been the very wings to me
On which existence floats or rests—
These only shall my eras be."

As I walked back, I felt myself very much lifted out of my oppression. Somebody had defended me. The current no longer swept irresistibly on, all, all one way. To have had a wrong acknowledged, and my forgiveness asked, and an individual bound by a promise which I thought he could not dare to break, never to indulge again towards me his love of insulting and tormenting—really I was emerging into light, freedom, and consequence. I should not always be obliged to cower and shrink before the coarse, low people whom I had so dreaded. It did me a world of good to have been so vindicated; and as to Mr. Radford, I could have baked potatoes for him on the hottest day and never felt warm. I thought how could I do something to make him comfortable. At night he always bathed his feet, and he had a little vessel for that purpose which he kept in his chamber. I could think of nothing else but filling this with water, so that he should not have to go for it himself. He smiled, when he came down-stairs after supper, and taking advantage of the back of the enemy for a moment, laid his hand on my shoulder with a gentle pressure, which was a full acknowledgment of my small effort. Aunt and he were very dignified and restrained after the morning. The contempt that occasionally flashed out of his blue eyes, and spoke in his gestures, was suppressed chiefly, I thought, on my account. But it showed a bow that would not bear further bending without peril.

I had no chance to get Albert's communication in the dairy-yard. We each milked eight cows, and there were eight others milked by anybody who could be spared, and when no one came we had to divide them between us. I could have wept with the pain in my hands and arms almost every night and morning, but that I had so much else to do and think of. This night, especially, after the excitements and fatigue of the day, I had great difficulty in getting through my double task, but as Tom had generally assisted us, I said not a word about other help. After supper, aunt had fortunately to go out and call on a sick neighbor, poor Mrs. Rumsey, and when Albert had watched her beyond hearing, he came back and said hurriedly:

"I heard you talking with Mr. Radford the other night about *her* calling you a fool, and I want you to talk with my father about it. I am going home to-morrow night, and I'll tell him to come over, shall I?"

"But I could not talk with him," I said; "*she* would hinder me all the time."

"Well, if he comes he'll contrive some way to speak to you; and if you could only hear him ten minutes, you'd never think of asking anybody again if you were a fool or foolish. I'll tell him, and he'll be sure to come."

"He don't know me, I suggested," half doubtfully.

"He knows you well enough," said the boy earnestly; "and I've heard him say that he'd give all he has in the world if one of his children had the talents you have."

While he was saying this, I seemed to undergo a transformation. I felt a power, as it were, swelling through my whole being. My brain seemed to glow with the life that flowed into it from those wondrous words. I could not doubt their truth, for Albert was strictly honest, and his father was acknowledged to be the most intelligent and reading man of the neighborhood. How strangely I felt! I turned this over and over, and wings seemed lent to my spirit. My oppression fell, as a cast-off garment, to my feet. Conscious of a strength of which I had

vaguely dreamed, but always doubted, even in my best moments, I suddenly felt myself a giant for my own rescue. I looked back upon the past, with burning contempt for what was coarse and degrading in it; and wild, broken visions of the future swept over me, as the sunbeams illuminate portions of the earth that have just passed out of eclipse. I stood up, feeling taller than when I was last on my feet, and said, I imagine with some dignity, for a faint, queer smile flickered over the face of my interlocutor:

"I shall be very glad to see and talk with your father, Albert, but since Mr. Radford spoke to her yesterday morning, and I have promised him to be as good as I can, I should not like to do anything to make her angry, so I hope he can manage it in some way without that."

"Yes, he will. He knows her well, and you may be sure, he'll do it right."

"I thank you, Albert," I said, gravely; and I offered him my hand which he took and retained, while I added, "You couldn't have said anything that would make me so happy. Some other time I'll talk to you more about it. Now, I want to get alone. Good night."

I was not long alone before I found another want as pressing as the last had been—that of instruction. My whole nature rose and seemed to consume me with one giant craving—the desire to know. I no longer sought to measure or regulate myself by Betsey or Rosanna. I felt I was to live my own life—a different one from theirs; and they were no longer anything more to me than playmates, with whom I could spend my lighter hours; there was to be no more stretching or curbing by them—no deferring to their standard.

I did not go to bed, for I wished aunt to come home and retire first, that I might keep my candle burning a little longer. Light seemed to help clear my ideas. When she came in, I was mending a torn frock as well as I could. She had taught me to sew well, and it pleased her to speak graciously to me now, and

even to commit the almost unprecedented act of uttering a word of commendation. I could not respond to it, for I felt that I had been too grievously wronged, and was now too earnest in seeking redress. She retired, bidding me go to bed as soon as I had done a few more stitches. This I did, indeed; but, being in extreme want of help, I took a book from the bureau in my room, where the few which the household contained were chiefly kept. They were large, unwieldy volumes, mostly medical, to aid the administration of common remedies in the absence of a physician. They were Thatcher's Dispensary, somebody's Practice, Darwin's Zoonomia, and two or three other smaller works. How Darwin found his way there I am unable to conjecture. I had often looked into the volume, and had a dim notion that the man who wrote it must have been very learned; for it differed from the few other books I had seen, in neither relating what persons had done, nor describing things that they had seen; and so I felt how much he must have *thought* to write all this. To-night I had a greater interest than ever before in examining this book. It was its size and its large words that I wished to estimate. Of course, I could scarcely derive any clear idea from one sentence that I read. But I knew he must have understood all, and thought all; and if he had, there must be the same power in other minds, for he was only a man.

I turned and tossed all night. My dreams were gay fragments of magnificent visions. The spirit seemed to unfold from its slumber and struggle up into the glorious light of the possible. Great achievements

> ——"in glimmering dawn
> Half shown, were broken and withdrawn."

When I arose in the morning I felt myself etherealized. The grand assurance of power, the consciousness thereof unqualified by the oppressive doubts that had hitherto held me in chains, buoyed me above the earth, so that I seemed to float, rather than walk on it. I was passing through imaginary scenes all

day. If I went into the pantry I fancied myself entering a room full of wise persons, who received me as one of themselves. The ranks of cheeses on the shelves became men and women, who treated me cordially, and talked to me on grave and learned subjects. More than once during the day, I found the evil eye fixed on me, with an expression of wonder, but it did not trouble me. I was far above, and away from it. If it appear that I exaggerate the intense joys of that time, let any soul consider what it is to be utterly stripped of that which it craves; to have the whole force of a powerful nature concentrated upon one desire, without which, life itself would seem a painful vacuity; and, after ceaseless struggle, and doubt, and questioning, to attain it suddenly—in a moment to feel the inrushing tides of freedom and strength, and hail in exultant joy the clearly defined *me*, the something which I had so long and painfully groped after, which doubled myself and multiplied indefinitely my advantage—the bridegroom, who came in from without and wedded himself tenderly, with all his overflowing power, to the feeble, oppressed, shrinking consciousness, that held uncertain occupancy in my bruised bosom. Think not that I can ever overstate the emotions of that day, memorable as few others in my life have been.

The miser who after long toil discovers inexhaustible treasure; the ambitious, who has conquered the last enemy; the vain, who sees no successful rival in the show of life; the loving, who, through consuming anxiety, and apprehensions that sicken the fainting heart, at last obtains the object of yearning; all rejoice when their time of fruition arrives. The world sees their joy and sympathizes in it. I had attained in the few words spoken to me more than each or all. I had attained *myself*, and the possibility, it seemed to me, of all else that I could desire. I was intensely happy, and removed infinitely further from the material degradations of my daily life. Out of these I now saw the certain escape—not exactly the path, but in glimpses, the broad, full life to which by some path I should by and by come.

CHAPTER IX.

"A good man is God's best legacy to this straying world."

"Thou banishest my sweetest dreams,
And yet, I cannot call thee foe."

I WAS made glad a day or two later, by the sight of Albert's father, for though I no longer awaited his decision, I wished to talk with him. It was not possible at the house; for *she* seemed at times to have the gift of ubiquity. I was out during most of his stay there, but passing once or twice through the room, I heard him asking leave for me to visit his daughters. At first I think she refused peremptorily; and when he went away I did not know if he had prevailed or not; but on Saturday afternoon a young girl whom I had never seen before, came to our house. I recognized her at once, for she bore a striking resemblance to her brother. She had come to take me home with her, she said.

We milked the cows early, and Albert went with us; and a happy walk it was, over the meadows, and by a devious, clean path through a broad belt of wood. When we reached the well-ordered, neat log cabin, with its little "flower patch" in front, supper was already laid, and the whole family assembled in the room we first entered. Mrs. Garland, who was in feeble health, had a plain face, but the softest and gentlest expression. She stood up a moment when I was presented to her, and took my hand kindly; then she looked full in my eyes, and, as if approving what she found there, drew me toward her and kissed my forehead. It was so new to me—I could not remember that any one of my own sex had kissed me since I parted with my sisters long ago; only once or twice in more than four years that I could recollect, had my adopted father treated me with

that mark of personal affection. I had been so often told that I was frightfully ugly—I knew so well that I was, too—that I never expected it from any one. It seemed to me that I must be a little less homely after it.

We were invited to table, and Mr. Garland, after all were seated, stood up. I was looking at him, wondering why he stood so still, when he raised his right hand, with a gesture and expression which my instinct understood at once, though I could not remember ever having seen such a ceremony since I left my good grandfather's, where, according to Friend's custom, we had been trained to sit silent, with face downward, for a few moments before taking our food. I did not know then what it meant, but Mr. Garland, in a few reverential words, solemnly spoken, explained it all. I was afraid to speak cheerfully after the grace lest it should offend; and was quite surprised by the children presently plunging into a succession of little jokes and banterings, that were perfectly dazzling and wonderful to me. I could not at once get free among them, and, though I felt that I was breathing a very atmosphere of love and tenderness, I was not for some time happy. Mary, the oldest daughter, who had come with me, was a little graver and seemed to feel a sort of responsibility toward me, which reserved her a little from the general conversation; and Mrs. Garland, also, occasionally addressed me. She offered me a cup of tea, which I ventured to decline, and then Albert, with a queer look, said, "shall I tell, Eliza, why you won't drink tea?"

"Oh, do!" exclaimed several voices at once. But Albert did not speak instantly, and when I looked up, I saw that he was waiting for his father, who said, when they were all silent:

"Children, Eliza has not said yes; and I am sure you would not wish Albert to tell something she had said to him, if it would displease her."

"Oh, but would it displease you?" said a vivacious little thing of about my own age, who seemed to me very young. She understood her brother's expression, and thought there would be something very amusing in the story.

"No, it wouldn't displease me," I replied, "if you didn't laugh too much at me."

"I'll tell it easy," said Albert, with a comical look, which seemed to mean, it is very funny, and I could make you split your sides, if it were not for her.

So he related what I had communicated to him one day; that Marcia and Rosanna Edwards had told me of their mother's wanting tea so much, and how I concluded from that, and from hearing aunt and other women who visited her talk about it, that it must be very bad to get to wanting it, and so I had determined never to drink a single cup. And he added, "She's never going to drink any whisky either, because, Rumsey, when he drinks it, destroys the things in the house. There, now, I told you I'd tell it easy, and you see nobody laughs."

"I don't see anything to laugh at," said little sprightly.

"No; but father and mother and I do," he said. "That story is for older heads than yours, miss."

"But Eliza isn't any older than I am," she insisted.

"She's fifty years at least," said her brother.

"Yes, my dear," said the mother, her mild, distinct utterance seeming to overcome the rapid chatter, as a lull breaks the whistle and rush of a gale; "Eliza is a great deal older than you in her thoughts, for I am sure you would never think of leaving off eating or drinking anything because it hurt somebody else."

All the evening I felt a little confused. I did not know if it would be right to speak or do certain things that I felt impelled to, the grace before supper had so unsettled me. In every pause I was trying to clear my mind about it, and ascertain my relation to the people "who believed in such things." For at home I never heard the acknowledgment or worship of God alluded to but with coarsest ridicule or virulent ill-nature. I was quite distressed. Doubts even of Mr. Garland's infallibility in the matter that had so comforted me, did vaguely rise in the remote borders of my thought. Religious, praying people I

always heard denounced as fools or hypocrites, and the more I thought of it the more unhappy I grew, that Mr. Garland should be among them. I *felt* that he was good, and that the family was charming; so loving and considerate, and never a harsh or cruel word, for Mary and Albert had proudly told me so in the woods, and yet I thought he must be either bad or weak.

Before we went to bed there were prayers regularly attended, with all the children on their knees. (I did not know what to do till I saw the last one go down and then I knelt too.) But my thoughts were in the wildest tumult, and when he prayed specially for the little orphan stranger, I was well-nigh distracted, between the deep tenderness that was stirred in my heart and the insult I thought was offered to my reason. For all my teaching had brought me to disdain prayer, and despise those who offered it. I doubted if I ought not to protest, and yet, when we rose, they were so very kind, and bade me good-night, as Mary and I retired up the narrow, straight, rude stairs, so tenderly, that I could not say a word. Mary and I talked a little, but I could not startle her with my thoughts; so we only said a few commonplace things beside my expression of great admiration for her mother, and went to sleep.

I had heard it said by the girls of my acquaintance, that what one dreamed the first night one slept in a house, would come to pass; and the extreme novelty of the circumstance in my life, made me think of this. I wished for certain dreams, and in my heart, prayed the Something Invisible that I believed in, to send me those I wanted. I desired to dream of going to school; but I did not, nor of much else that I could remember in the morning; but I felt more comfortable and settled for the sleep. If, only, they wouldn't pray now, I thought, while I was dressing, and I ventured to ask Mary, when she came up-stairs, if they would.

"Oh, yes!" she replied; "we have prayers every morning, and Sunday mornings longer than other days. Father has more time then."

"And does he think," I asked, "that God has more time to hear?"

The words were spoken, and I could not recall them, though I would have given my right hand to have done it. She gave me such a look of astonishment, and I thought she shrunk further back as she said, "Why, Eliza, Albert has always told me you were so very good!"

"Has he?" I asked, going on fastening my frock, though my fingers became suddenly benumbed and cold, for I felt the whole weight of that broad condemnation. It sunk with leaden pressure into every fibre and current of my being. I condemned myself, too, for I knew that the feelings of religious people were very tender in regard to their religion. I had seen that often in controversies in our house, and my large veneration gave me an intuition of the same fact. Yet I thought it weak to be governed by that. I *ought* to speak my mind. I was in great danger of making a total failure this time. I trembled with the sudden nervous depression, and knew not how to regain what I had lost. But my frank, loving nature, which had been very strongly appealed to in this house, prompted me to throw myself on the girl's kindness, and, choking back my rising emotions, I said, as firmly as I could, while I put my arm about her waist—

"Well, Mary, don't think ill of me for what I have said. I wouldn't speak a word to hurt one of you, who are so kind to me, for the world. I know very little about such things, certainly, and I shouldn't have spoken if I had thought of the difference in our feelings; but don't think I am worse than Albert says I am, for I wouldn't do anything wrong if I knew it. Will you forgive me, and not tell your father and mother? I'd rather talk to them myself."

"Oh, yes," she answered kindly, but less heartily than I wished. She just touched her lips to mine, and I followed her downstairs, comparatively strengthened and tranquillized. The little scene and its result had calmed me for the morning devotion;

and when the cheerful breakfast was over, and Mrs. Garland had shown me about the girls' flower-beds, and spoken very kindly to me on several subjects, such as the apples and peaches on our farm, and the haying, and uncle's absence, I felt quite reassured and easy. By and by her husband came out of his little bed-room, shaved and dressed, and I was about to ask if he were going away, when he said, "There is no meeting to-day, Eliza, and the children all want to walk down and see the great drift wood. Will you go with us?"

"Oh, yes," I answered, gladly, for I had thought of sitting in the house all day; "I shall be very glad to go. Will Mary go along?"

"No," said her mother. "I have to keep Mary at home with me." But the girl was very cheerful and bright, and said her turn would come next time. So I saw she was not selfish or ill-natured. So different from Rhoda Peterson! We set off, and after we got well into the fields, Mr. Garland came close to my side and asked me how I had liked the last book Albert had taken me. It was a life of Lafayette.

"Oh, very much, except I thought it was mean in him to thwart Napoleon," who was just then a great hero to me.

Mr. Garland smiled, and said, "I think Lafayette was a better man than Napoleon, and it was quite right that he should oppose him."

"But," I replied, "Lafayette did not love anybody as Napoleon loved Josephine. And he couldn't fight battles so well, and he was never half as handsome. His eyes were too big, and his forehead too low."

"His eyes and his forehead, my dear," said he, "looked, I suppose, as God made them to. It is what we do, and not what sort of eyes, and nose, and mouth, we have that makes us handsome or homely."

When he said this, it diverted me from the characters we were discussing to my own great calamity of an ugly face.

"Mr. Garland," I said, "do you think that being very good—

as good as one could possibly be—would make a girl that was *very* homely look handsome ?"

"It would make everybody love her, and that would be the same thing, wouldn't it ?"

"Oh, no, indeed, sir ; because they wouldn't know that she was very good when they first saw her, but they would know if she was handsome, when they looked once at her."

"Yes," he replied, "but we do not always love handsome people, nor handsome children, when we first see them."

"We love to look at them, though. I love to look at your little Laura, because she is handsomer than any of the other children. I'm so very homely myself that I should like somebody that knows, to tell me whether if I was very good I should grow handsome."

"And then would you be good for that ?"

"I would try, for that," I said.

"And if it did not make you more beautiful ?"

"Then I should be sorry."

"But you would still be good ?"

"Oh, yes, because I shouldn't be happy if I were not."

"Then, my dear," he replied, "if you are always of that mind it won't make much difference whether you are handsome or not. People will love you all the same. God has not given you beauty, but he has given you a great deal that other little girls have not—fine talents, which you must use to do good, and a wonderful memory, by which you may become very wise, if you study."

Mr. Garland's words fell very quietly on my ear, and on my spirit. I had become so well acquainted with myself since Albert had told me his father's opinion, that I was not in the least excited by what he now said.

I confessed to him that I had been very anxious to know if I had good sense or not, but that Albert had already told me he thought so, and so I was at rest about it. "But, sir," I said, "there is another thing I wish you would advise me about, and

that is, how I am to get to school?" We walked some time in silence after this question. At length he said—

"I cannot advise you about that now, Eliza. Poor child, I can only pity you; but I trust much in God for you. He has given you good gifts, and in some way or other He will take care that you are educated, so that you can use them."

I felt partly inclined to comfort myself with this vague trust secretly, but strangely impelled to renounce it altogether in words. If Mr. Radford, or anybody whom I respected, had helped me to the opinions I wished to express, I should have quoted my authority without fear or shame; but I shrunk from referring to aunt, and uncle always seemed to me to believe and say what he did, because she demanded it of him.

I walked on meditating what I should do. At length I said, rather timidly, "Mr. Garland, at home they don't believe that God does any such thing as you say he will, and they laugh about people who do, or who pray to him."

"I know that, my child," he said, sadly, "and that is the greatest danger you are in. Your mind will be very apt, I'm afraid, to be affected by it; but I believe God will take care of you in that, too. Don't think as they think, if you can help it; but whatever you may think, Eliza, always be as good as possible. Do not let anything or anybody tempt you to do wrong. Never say what isn't true; never let bad people or children lead you astray, and learn all you can from good ones and from the few books you can get; and in time I feel certain that some way will open to you to get to school. It is right in you to desire it. Do not give it up, and God *will* help you."

This conversation tamed and yet it strengthened me. It made assurance doubly sure, as to myself and what I ought to do; and it helped me to look practically at my duties and difficulties, with a purpose to work my way out of them.

That evening Albert and I had to return home early, that we might be in time for the milking. Mr. Garland accompanied us to the bank of the creek, opposite our house, and sat with me

while Albert waded the stream and paddled the canoe over. He was very encouraging and helpful, and yet he pruned the extravagance of my ideas most effectually. Listening to his sensible, tender, and unimaginative talk, I could feel something of the struggle that was before me—the patience that would be demanded: the humiliating and wearing delay.

"Eliza," he said, "you are young enough yet. Do not feel too impatient."

"I am almost ten years old," I said.

"Yes; but if you do not get to school for three or four years yet, it will do."

"Oh, Mr. Garland—three or four years! I shall be a woman soon after that, and then I can't go."

"You can go when you are twenty, if you choose, child; and you'll learn the faster for being older. Whenever you can learn anything now, do so; and, I need not say, don't forget it, for I believe you could not. Any book that you want, Albert shall bring to you. I would not encourage you to disobedience in anything else, but this is right, I know, whatever she says—only try to avoid provoking her. It grieves us to hear of your being beaten and abused, and perhaps if you were more careful a part of it could be avoided."

CHAPTER X.

——"The unhappy man was found,
The spirit settled, but the reason drowned;
And all the dreadful tempest died away,
To the dull stillness of the misty day!"

Time went on with me, after these events, much as before. The strong inner purpose which now I clearly and unquestioningly cherished, lent, I imagine, a certain dignity to my bearing; for from this time my diminutives began to be heard less

frequently. Tonny and Tonewanta were never spoken. They were not coarse enough to satisfy the ill-temper that demanded the most wounding epithets, and not respectful enough to be used by those who began to understand in me something else than a child to be pitied and petted for her natural infirmities. In moments of extreme satisfaction, Mr. Radford did occasionally call me Dolly yet; but except on such occasions, I was given my Christian name.

I was most anxious to see Mr. Fleming; for, by much thinking on the subject I wished to inquire of him about, and upon others of which he was likely to be master, I had come to regard him as a sort of living encyclopedia, which I had but to turn to for anything I wished to know. Mr. Garland had told me that he was a kind man and a gentleman, and that I need not fear to approach him. But he did not come. Meantime, fortune favored me in another way. Our house being larger than any other in the neighborhood, and perhaps better kept, was the resort of those, who, for any reason might wish to stop for a few days in it. Some persons from a town about thirty miles distant, connected with land agencies, came and put up with us. The party numbered five or six, the chief persons being a wealthy German gentleman and his two sons.

I scarcely spoke to these young men. In their eyes I was a scullion, with scarcely stronger claims to their consideration than my pet lamb. But I gathered many details of external refinement from them. I learned that my hair could be greatly improved by much brushing; that my hands pleased me much better when my nails were well cleaned; that polished persons never attempted to speak with the mouth full of food; that well-bred young people never interrupted the speech of older persons; and I corrected many little vulgarisms of expression, of which I had never before been conscious. I watched them keenly the few days I had the benefit of their presence, and I know I profited sensibly by it; for when I next saw Mr. Garland, and told him what I had endeavored to correct in myself

by their example, he expressed the greatest satisfaction, and called the attention of his wife and daughter to it with as much interest as if I had been one of themselves. Thus one sees that purity and delicacy, even in external things, are not without their value.

This autumn poor Mrs. Rumsey's troubles reached their climax. I used sometimes to go in and talk with her; but I rarely saw her husband, and when I did, he was so entirely repulsive and brutal, that I fled from his presence as I would from that of a fiend. I never saw them without wondering how she stayed in the house with him, and I was often on the point of asking her, but was as often restrained by a sense of delicacy that warned me to stay my tongue, lest I might pain her. One afternoon she came into our house, weeping, and told aunt that she had determined to go away to her brother, who lived about forty miles distant, in another State. This brother had had her little boy for a year or more, because the mother would not keep him with his father, to witness his dreadful conduct. I pitied Mrs. Rumsey intensely, painfully, to myself; and I could never feel, notwithstanding Squire Edwards's fine appearance on military days, and the holding of courts at his house, that he was really so fine a man as people generally thought him, because of his participation in this business. In a few days after Mrs. Rumsey's visit, I heard aunt and uncle and Mr. Radford talking over her affairs; and when, afterwards, I asked Mr. Radford about it, he told me that she was to leave her husband and go to her brother the next week.

"And what will become of him?"

"Why, Dolly, to tell you the truth very plainly, I expect he'll go to the devil, as fast as he can."

"But who will take care of him, and cook his food, and keep his clothes clean and whole?"

"I don't know," said he, "and I care as little. It's of small consequence what becomes of such as he is. But, if you wish, you can have a chance to help her off. Bill King is going to

drive the wagon, with her things in it, to her brother's, and I dare say she'd be glad of a handy little girl, like you, to help get them together."

"I'll help her," I said, heartily; and I felt quite enthusiastic at the thought. "I should be glad to know she was where she could have a little comfort."

When the day came for her departure, some one invited her husband out, drunk as he was, and kept him through the day and night. In the morning he went home quite sober, and found his house left to himself. One room was prepared for his occupation, and the others, quite deserted but neat, looked blank and comfortless enough. He had himself banished all comfort, nay, even decency itself, from the house, for long months; but he went into a fearful state of rage when he found himself alone. He shouted, raved, cursed, but all in vain. There was nobody now to be terrified or tortured by his brutality. After expending his fury, he came out with a bottle in each hand, and repaired to the distillery, and I do not think he was ever again quite sober. I had an intense desire to see and speak to him; but Mr. Radford cautioned me so sharply and frequently, during the first two or three days, that I did not venture near the house. He promised that when he became good-natured enough to be safe, he would let me know, and then I should go, if I wished to. There were in our field, just across the road from his house, two huge crab-apple-trees, to which I was very fond of resorting. I had often talked from beneath them with Mrs. Rumsey, at her door or window; and I went over there, when Mr. Radford told me he was quiet, and saw him sitting by the open window. He looked haggard and wretched, and I could not help feeling an almost tearful compassion for him, notwithstanding his bad deeds and words.

Presently he leaned upon the sill, and, putting his head outside, called to me, in a thick voice, "I say, little girl—Eliza, or what's your name, come here, will you? I want to speak to you."

I had been cautioned too often, to put myself now entirely within his reach ; but I advanced into the road, and finally, by degrees, got up to the gate, waiting for him to speak ; but I determined to go no farther. When he saw me stop he said, "Come in, won't you? I want you to tell me about my wife."

"No, sir," I said, "I can't come any farther."

"Why not? I shan't hurt you ; come in."

"No," I said, "Mr. Radford told me not to, and I shan't come inside the gate."

"Mr. Radford? He ain't your master, is he? He was among you when you helped her off, wasn't he?"

"Yes ; and Mr. Heath, and Mrs. Ball, and the Pomeroys, and everybody helped her, because you behaved so very badly, sir."

"Yes," he said, with a fearful imprecation upon them all ; "if I had 'em in hell I'd roast 'em."

"But why," I asked, "were you not good to your wife? and then she wouldn't have gone away, and nobody would have wanted to help her. We all wanted her to go long ago."

"You did, did you, you little d—l?" he said, with an impatient motion, as if he would have hurled something at me. "What! did you help her off too?"

"I carried things out of the house to be put in the wagon. I carried some small boxes, and Johnny's little chair, and the spider, and a looking-glass wrapped up between two pillows, because Mrs. Ball said it would perhaps get broken, unless it was put with something soft."

"If I had her here," he said, "I'd break her old neck, d—n her." His frightful profanity revolted me. It was so different from Mr. Radford's, which seemed always to express right feelings that were too strong for common language.

Still I lingered, because I wished to remind him of what I had said to him long ago, and that if he had remembered and done it, his wife would not now be gone from him. So I said, what was quite true, "Mr. Rumsey, I am very sorry for you, but if you had promised not to drink any more whisky, when I met

you once over on the bank, and had kept your promise, your wife wouldn't have had to go away. I wish you had ; don't you ?" He looked at me a moment out of his little red, shrunken eyes, flaming with rage. Gradually the anger died out of them, and a softer expression came there.

I was watching for the next turn when it came with a great outburst of tears, "By God, I wish I was dead !"

I did not know what word to say to that. Such a wish, so fearfully expressed, was quite beyond my depth. The utter misery defied my small power of consolation. Thinking a moment, it seemed to me that if even now he would give up drinking whisky, he might yet be happy. Even his wife might come back.

I was quite inspired by this thought, and said, with the enthusiasm of the moment, "Oh, Mr. Rumsey, if you should never get drunk again, perhaps Mrs. Rumsey would come back and bring Johnny with her. I believe she would. I'd write to her myself, and you can't think how glad I should be—I should, indeed. Now don't swear so any more, and then you'll think better about it. And don't go to Jackson's again, and you'll see that by and by you'll look so much better and feel so much happier. Now won't you do it ?" I said, in my earnestness advancing within the gate.

"You're a good little girl, I believe," he said, "but you don't understand what you're talking about. If I should do what you ask I shouldn't live a year."

"Aunt and uncle say," I replied, "that you won't live six months going on so."

"Do they ? Then I'll go to hell in spite of them. Tell 'em so."

I walked quickly away from the gate, considering myself answered finally in those words. A week or two afterward I saw a wagon standing before his house. Some men were in it, and another came out with him, bringing a trunk. They drove away, and when I asked Mr. Radford where he was going, he

replied, "To the county house—he's a pauper in earnest now, Dolly. If he had gone there months ago it would have been better for his wife and child." He never appeared among us again. I used to take a hurried, frightened turn through the deserted garden occasionally, half expecting to hear him start upon me from behind some rose or currant bush; but after the flowers faded with the touch of the autumn frost, I almost forgot that there had ever been such a being.

This fall I often missed Mr. Radford in the evening. As usual at this season of the year, we had a great many apples to dry, and the peeling, cutting, and threading them on long twine strings were the evening work of the whole household. I wondered a great deal why Mr. Radford was so often away, but when I asked him he laughed and said he had been to see a bird up in the woods—a pretty one that sung more sweetly than the robins or thrushes I was so fond of in the spring. Another time he said it was a mermaid, and then a pair of white swans that had been taken in a heavy storm a few days before. I understood perfectly that I was not to believe any of these stories, and at length I so worried and beset him after every absence, that he said once, very gravely, in reply to one of my attacks, "Eliza, I am going to be married by and by." A great shock run over me, for quick as thought I saw that then he would live in another house. I said so very sadly.

"Yes," he replied, "certainly, I shouldn't bring my wife to live here—with *her*."

"Who is it going to be?" I inquired.

"I think she isn't among your acquaintance, Dolly," returning to his old bantering tone. "I'll introduce her to you some day when she is Mrs. Radford."

"What is her name?"

"Julia Anna, of course," he said, affecting astonishment. It was his pet name, and whenever he particularly wished to tease me, he told me that if I were handsomer he would call me Julia Anna, but I was too homely.

"Dolly," he said, "when we—Julia Anna and I—get to living in our own house you'll come sometimes and see us, you know. I must be very fine with *her*, so that she'll let you, and you'll have such good times."

"I hope Julia Ann is"——

"Julia *Anna*, miss; don't cut her name short."

"I hope Julia Anna is good-natured, and will be as kind to me as you've been," I said, the tears at last running over.

"She will be," he replied, a little moved himself. "She is very good, and I have told her about you, and that you're the only relation I have here. I think there is nobody else will cry when I'm married."

"And I shouldn't," I said, "for I suppose you like it or you wouldn't do it; only that I don't like you to go away from this house. I shall be so lonesome and—and afraid without you.' My grief was becoming violent, and Mr. Radford drew me to his knee, and laid my head on his shoulder. When I had sobbed, and choked, and smothered my emotions, so as to be able to speak, I said, "There will never be anybody here like you. Nobody else will ever whip Tom Peterson, or tell him not to abuse me. Oh, I shall feel so dreadfully sometimes, and you will be away!"

"But, Eliza," he said, constraining me to sit erect and listen to him, "you are getting older now, and can take care of yourself better. As to Tom Peterson, or any other fellow who undertakes to frighten you as he did, I'm always ready for them. Only tell me of anybody that does it, and I'll take care of 'em. Keep out of their way as much as you can; but that you do, I know. Don't let 'em have a chance to speak to you, if you can help it. But if they plague you and talk to you in ways you don't like, speak to Uncle John about it. He'll take care of that."

"Will you tell him?" I asked, "for I believe he thinks what a little girl says or wants isn't of much consequence."

"Yes, I will," he replied, promptly. "And as for the old wo-

man—it's difficult, I know, for you to get along with her. It is for anybody ; but maybe if you try very hard, you may do a little better. Sometimes you might start a little quicker when she speaks, though lightning itself couldn't always be quick enough for her ; and sometimes I've seen that your looking as if you had forgotten everything around you, enrages her. But I suppose you can't help that, can you ? That's when you're thinking of the things you told me a long time ago—when the great freshet was, that I couldn't understand, eh ? You can't help that always, I know ; but maybe trying sometimes will make it a little better. You've grown since that time, Dolly, though you're small enough now, and you ought to be able to remember better than you could then."

"I do remember, Mr. Radford, everything I read and hear."

"Yes, but it isn't those that she wants you to remember. She doesn't care whether you know who captured Cornwallis and who took Ticonderoga or not. She wants you to remember all about the housework, and the things you have to do."

"And I don't care anything about them ; they are not a bit interesting to me, and I cannot remember them."

"But you must try, child ; so that you get along in the best way with her, that's all; for I guess you'll never be a famous cook or cheesemaker."

"I don't want to be. Now I've found out that I am not a fool, I mean to do something else when I'm a woman."

"Yes, that's right enough, too; but take it easy, Dolly; you are young enough yet, and don't provoke her to beat you, by reading or studying when she wants you to be at work."

"That is always," I said. "She never wants me to take a book, except to read to her or uncle, or somebody that comes here ; and when they say anything about my reading well, she makes them think I learned from her, and that isn't true. Oh, I wish—I wish"——

"Come, come, now, Eliza ; you're growing older and wiser ;

don't fret about what you can't help; but try to do your best, and better days will come."

I felt Mr. Radford's loss sadly, in more ways than one. Besides that I was lonely from having no one in his place to speak to, and that I often wanted his advice and opinions, which I had been accustomed to rely much upon, I thought in his absence more of my father than I had before. Having lost the only efficient protector I had known in my exile, my mind very frequently reverted to him with a painful sadness—an actual dismay, which I cannot express. My nature demanded somebody to trust in. As to love, I had been too long denied the indulgence of that tenderer feeling, to think much of the possibility of ever loving anybody as I had my sisters and grandparents. I did not love my father, I only wished that I could, and that he would save me from the ill treatment I was receiving.

But amid all my conflicting emotions and painful experiences, I did not forget Mr. Garland's kind and welcome encouragement to learn all I could. He sent me a few sheets of paper—one folded and cut as a little book, for memoranda of notable facts, and a pencil to write them with, which I often used, but more from the love of doing things in what I thought a regular and right way, than from need of putting anything in writing, for my memory was perfect. I was a sort of living register of all sorts of facts that came within my knowledge.

CHAPTER XI.

"Hold thy words, for each thou utterest
Hath its weight of horror. These will never more
Be music to my ear."

"Is there no soul, no heart—no God?"

My personal appearance at this time, though somewhat improved upon what it had been, was yet sufficiently rude and poor to cause me many troubled thoughts. Mr. Radford had very kindly procured me a hair-brush, and sometimes I set about using it thoroughly, with a full purpose to do all that was possible to make myself look better; but I had so little respite from the drudgery that seemed never to be ended, that these resolutions failed almost with their formation. For I could not endure to let the few spare minutes I could get within doors, pass without a book or paper in my hand. I found, occasionally, in prints that fell in my way, bits of verses which I wished to commit, but I think I did not see a volume of poetry during all the years that I spent in this abode. There was a little poem on the discovery of America in which were expressed the emotions of that moment when lights were first beheld proclaiming the presence of the land they sought. It used to come to me often—sometimes when I was walking out of doors alone in the evening, and kindle such vivid realizations of what he must have felt in that proudest hour of a sublime life, that every nerve in me would thrill with a sort of electric glow as I recited mentally its finest passages.

My clothing was often much torn, because I had very little, and because no care was taken of it beyond the little I did myself. Thus my ugliness was aggravated. One day when I

was quite alone at the house, walking about the yard in a torn, dark, worsted frock, a person whom I at once pronounced to be Mr. Fleming, came and inquired for uncle. He was away from home, I answered—for his wife, then. She was gone to Mrs. Spicer's across the fields—would be home soon. I invited him to walk in, which he did hesitatingly; apparently debating with himself whether to stop at all or not. Meanwhile I was in a flutter for some expedient to detain him, for never again should I have such an opportunity to speak to him. What could I say? He was so entirely courteous and elegant in his manner, more so than anybody I could remember, except the young Germans and their father, and handsomer than either of them. After thinking a moment, he seemed to make up his mind to wait, and sat down. He looked at me and asked if I were Mr. Smalley's daughter?

"No, sir; I'm only his adopted daughter." I wished I had on my better frock, for now that I looked at him in speaking, I saw he was well dressed, and I knew he was Mr. Fleming, because he had the slightest possible softening of the aspirated *h*, which I had heard before, and heard spoken of, so that I had not forgotten it. But I could not talk to him till I knew his name; and though I was afraid I could not ask it like an English child, I mustered courage at length to say, "Will you please to tell me, sir, if you are Mr. Fleming?"

"Yes," he replied; "that is my name."

"The reason of my wishing to know," I said, "is that Mr. Radford, the man who lives with us, told me that you could tell me about the weavers in England."

He looked at me, half-laughing, but not rudely, and said, "Pray what do you wish to know, my girl, about the weavers of England?"

I felt a great difficulty in telling him just what I wanted to know, or how I came to desire the knowledge; but at last I said, feeling very warm and red in my face, "Mrs. Sandford weaves all the cloth I have ever seen made here, and there are

only two women besides her who have looms ; but they can't all make enough for the people that live about here, to wear; and when she told me so, I could not help thinking where all the cloth came from that all the people in the world want. I asked her, and she told me to ask Mr. Radford, and he told me to ask you, sir."

"Well, my child," he said, "I hardly know how to tell you what you wish to know. Is it whether all the cloth used in the world is made in England ?"

"Yes, sir," I said, my tongue now well loosed; "and whether women weave it as they do here, and what sort of looms they have ? I hope my asking you doesn't trouble you ; Mr. Garland told me you were a kind *gentleman*, and I need not be afraid to ask you."

"Oh, not in the least—not in the least," he replied, looking not so strangely or so much amused at me as strangers were apt to when I spoke to them in any such way. He laid his hat on a little stand near his chair, and went on to tell me in very clear and plain language about the great manufactories, and the spinning machines, and the looms, and the kinds of cloth they made, and how much a day in each loom. There were towns, he said, that were nearly all factories, and where the noise, night and day, would keep me from sleeping at first when I went into them ; but that was where they made iron and other metal things.

"But," I asked, "do they work all day and all night ?"

"Not the same persons," he replied.

"Do women weave the cloth in those looms as they do here ?"

"No, men do it there ; women do other things in the factories."

"Do they like to ?" I asked, with a kind of doubt, that in the great noisy places he described, they could not be as happy and cheerful as Mrs. Peterson was in her loom, singing as she often did so merrily.

"I suspect very few of them like it," said Mr. Fleming; "for they get very little pay, and sometimes don't have work enough, and then they have hard times."

Now, I had never witnessed actual destitution; hardly anything approaching to it. The people whom I had known, at home and here, were generally poor, but they had always plenty to live on, and the great question of supply had never come into my mind. But I had heard people talk of hard times, and an old woman who had taught aunt, when they first got all the cows, how to make cheese, had told me about a hard season when her children were all young, in which the cold weather destroyed the crops, and folks could scarcely get enough to eat. I knew, therefore, that hard times meant that people had trouble—had to take care, I thought, to have plenty of everything they wanted; but I had a general notion that in times that were not hard, all this came without care. That was pretty nearly my idea, when Mr. Fleming said that sometimes the weavers had hard times. So I said, "I suppose they can go visiting then, and do their sewing, and so on?"

Mr. Fleming looked at me, and smiled a queer smile. I had seen such ones so often. "He thinks I'm a fool," I thought; and my face felt heated as by a blaze. But before I had time to say anything else, he replied, "I am afraid they don't feel much like going visiting, as you call it, child. Poor things! they don't get enough to eat and keep them warm."

"Haven't they any friends," I asked, in astonishment, "who could give them some?"

"Their friends are generally no better off than themselves. They don't have enough to eat, either."

"What! not all day?—not for supper?"

"No; not for breakfast, nor dinner, nor supper."

I began to feel horribly oppressed with the idea which was growing out of his words.

"How many days?" I asked. "They must have enough on Saturdays and Sundays." I felt this, because on those days we

always seemed to have the greatest variety and abundance. The pantry was always filled with the Saturday cooking; and the feeling of plenty, without the labor of preparing it, was so pleasant and regular a thing to us, that I never doubted it was the same in all houses.

"No," said my informant, "not on Saturdays, nor Sundays, nor Mondays, nor Tuesdays, nor any other days. They are always hungry."

Merciful Heaven! with what a sickening feeling his words penetrated me. I could never bear that any animal should hunger for one hour; and to think of men and women, "and their little children, too?" I said, a new horror seizing me at that idea, which was so much more terrible.

"Yes; their little children, too—their boys, and girls, and their babies."

I felt dizzy at the thought of tender little infants, such as Mrs. Peterson's twins had been when I first saw them, being kept hungry. She would never let them be so, for anything. As soon as it was said, "The babies are hungry," she let go whatever she was doing, and attended to them.

"How dreadful that is!" I said. "Are there no rich people in that country?"

"Oh yes, a great many; but they can't feed the poor."

"Then I think the poor people oughtn't to weave them any cloth."

"What would you have them do, miss?"

"Can't they plant corn and potatoes, and have wheat grow in their fields?"

"They have no fields to plant in."

"But they could get some of the rich men's fields, and give them part, and then have enough for themselves." I knew people had fields of uncle in that way.

"But the rich men don't wish them to have their fields; and if they did, they have nothing to plough and plant them with."

As my hopes for them were thus, one after another, cut off, I seemed to feel the despair of their own dreadful lot.

"Mr. Fleming," I said, very earnestly, "what are they going to do? Will the rich people let them die?"

"Some of them I am afraid will die," he replied, "before they see better times. I can tell you a little story that will show you how they sometimes get along." And he related that a farmer, who had grain-fields and a fine garden, found his turnip-beds disturbed one morning. He didn't know what to think of it; but he concluded he would watch the next night, and see who did it. So he stayed concealed behind a bush or tree a long time; and at last a man came over the high fence, and walked to the turnip-bed and pulled some up. The farmer followed, and saw him go into a house very near his own. He knew the man was very poor, and had several children; so he thought he would say nothing about it till next morning. When he went into the house, the children were standing round a little bed in a corner of the room, and a sick boy lay on it. Their mother was there; and she had a basin and spoon in her hand, from which she was feeding him some broth. The farmer stepped forward, and she seemed very much frightened; but she sat still, and he saw in the bowl the pieces of his turnips. But he could not tell her of it, for the sick boy looked so eager for the broth, and the other poor children watched every spoonful he took with such hungry faces, though they did not speak, that he pitied them, and would not say anything about what their father had done. He asked the woman if he could see her husband, and she became paler than before, but told him the man was in bed yet; for he had no work to do, and nothing to eat. "But you appear to have food for your children," said the farmer.

"A little, sir," she replied, "for this poor sick one. The other ones have hardly a mouthful, and husband lies in bed because he doesn't get so hungry there as if he was up."

"The farmer," continued Mr. Fleming, "was going away.

without saying another word, but he thought he would tell her to send one of the children to get some vegetables for more broth. She thanked him, and told him that she had no more meat to make it of. And what do you think she had made that of?"

I sat frozen into silence by this dreadful narration.

"Of a cat that had come to their house!"

I could not speak for some time. I did not feel at all like crying, but I was weak and cold; for I instantly imagined myself one of those poor children—that one lying sick and helpless, so much worse off than the others. I felt shame in my heart for ever having thought my lot so hard, and wished that I could go there and say something kind to them. And I thought, "How can the rich people let them be so poor?"

Mr. Fleming was evidently studying me, for he said: "I see you feel very sorry for those children. You look pale. You would give them a dinner if you could."

"I would give everything in the world," I said, "if I had it, to feed them all. It is so dreadful, it makes me sick here," putting my hand on my chest where I felt such a sinking, wretched sensation. "Couldn't any good persons," I asked, "help them, if they went there?"

"Not very easily, I am afraid," said Mr. Fleming.

"Well, if it wasn't easy, I should think they would do it, if they could. I am sure I would. I never knew that anybody was hungry before, except sometimes. It makes me very unhappy. I wish you hadn't told me, Mr. Fleming."

"But you asked me, child," he said. "What is your name?"

"Eliza, sir."

"A pretty name; but what else?"

"Woodson. Eliza Woodson."

"Have you a father and mother living?"

"No mother."

"But a father?"

I said "Yes," reluctantly.

"Do you like to stay here?"

At this moment I heard aunt's footsteps, and had no time to reply in words, but my looks must have told the whole story to him. I rose before she entered, and busied myself with something; for she always scolded if she found me not at work, though everything I could possibly think of or do, was done. So I had got into the fashion of pretending that I was doing something, whenever she came in. It was the only habitual sham, or approach to anything like insincerity, that I can remember in all my life there.

I was at first a little fearful that Mr. Fleming might tell her of our conversation; but, for some reason or other, he abstained from all allusion to it or to me. He stayed a few minutes, and, having got his inquiries about uncle answered, went away. After he had gone, she gave me strict charge if he ever came again to the house when I was there alone, to be sure and ask him to sit down, if they were about house, and not to let her hear of my talking to him at all. He was a gentleman, she said, who had been used to see children mind their own business, and she wouldn't have him annoyed by me.

While she was saying it, I suddenly remembered that I had not asked him a word about the battles, and the ships, and the cannon, nor taken time to consider how he must have looked with a sword on for real fighting.

My interview with Mr. Fleming was a source of great pain to me. It was the first time I had ever comprehended the fact that hopeless suffering was in the world. I had before thought my own lot of the hardest, and I confidently looked for relief from my troubles; indeed I was fully determined upon having it, and so there was nothing like despair in my views of it. But here was a different case altogether. These people were so many, many thousands, Mr. Fleming had said, and so very badly off. It did not console me at all, to think that they were away in England, and that a great ocean was between us, which it took many weeks to cross. I could see them and feel their hunger all

the same as if they were near me. I thought of them when I sat down to meals; when I slept and when I woke; when I worked and when I was resting. And I never remembered them but to think, and think intensely, if nothing could be done for them. I wondered why any good people, such as Mr. Fleming was, ever left that country. If I were there, I thought, I should find so much to do.

When I talked to Mr. Radford about it, and expressed my great anxiety, he said, "Why, as to that, Eliza, how many weavers, men, women, and children, do you suppose you could feed in a day upon nothing?"

"But I would get something. I would go to the rich men and women, that you say ride in carriages and live in those great palaces, and tell them that there were people starving to death there, and they would have to give me something for them."

"But if you got something for Monday, what would you do for Tuesday! Don't you see the rich people could not keep on feeding them if they would, and at last they would have to go hungry."

"What did God make them for, then?" said I, altogether rebellious at their lot.

"You must ask a wiser man than I am that question," he replied.

"I wish I could know about it," said I, quite darkened and tormented. "The cattle and the lions, and the elephants and birds, and fishes, and whales, even (uncle had told me a great deal about whaling), have always enough to eat. I do not see why all these people should be hungry. I don't believe they ought to be, for though the rich could not feed them always, they could a while, till they got some weaving or other work to do, and then they could buy them food."

"Yes, that's exactly what they want—work; you see if they had work they never need be hungry."

"I know that," I said; "but why don't the rich people give them something to do? If that farmer had let the poor man

work in his fields all day, he wouldn't have had to steal the turnips at night, nor kill the cat to eat (feeling an inexpressible loathing at the thought), and the children could all have had enough. I am sure," I said, thinking very earnestly for a while, "it's the rich people that have got to do something about it, for the poor can't, and it cannot always be so, I know."

"Do you know it?" said Mr. Radford; "I'm afraid you'll be mistaken in that. I'm afraid there will always be poor people who will be hungry."

"But if I were in their places, I'd—stop being born," I said, hotly, for I felt that somehow or other I must find a way to get them out of their troubles.

Mr. Radford clasped his hands suddenly on the top of his head, and stretched himself perfectly straight, balancing his chair on its two back posts. He laughed all the time, but when he had put himself in this position he shouted with outrageous merriment; he rubbed his head and his face, and shouted again. Then he got up and hobbled to the door, pretending that he could scarcely walk.

"I don't see what you're laughing at," I said, almost angrily, for he hadn't spoken, and I was so earnest that I felt sure I couldn't have said anything that deserved to be so treated. Presently he came back, and began in a tone that I understood instantly, to put an end to serious talk. He said I was a great child; there was no mistake about it. It was such a mercy there was not another in the house, or in the neighborhood, or in the State, for he thought if there were two alive at the same time, they would endanger his life, and so on, in an endless, extravagant sort of banter that sometimes amused and sometimes vexed me. I was not a bit amused at this, and I told him so.

"Well, that's unfair," he said, "for your last speech was certainly the very best you ever made, Dolly."

I put down in my note-book many of the facts which Mr. Fleming had told me, as to numbers, and so on. I was obliged to write them in words, not being sufficiently acquainted with

the use of figures to trust myself to express large amounts in them. I wished to show them to Mr. Garland, and from him I learned several things, connected with the subject that so much interested me, which I had not had time to get from the other, as that there were many people in England who were distressed about this state of things, and who talked about trying to make it better; and he said also there was a man by the name of Cobbett, whose speeches were printed in a pamphlet; he had seen it, and would try to get it for me. This quite comforted me. I thought, if some of the people, then, understand how bad it is, and try to do something, it will be better by and by. Otherwise I felt that I ought to go myself, and in the meantime many would die without ever knowing how much I thought of them, and wished to help them.

These inquiries and speculations developed me into a full-grown Democrat. It is true that Mr. Clay and Mr. Webster were my greatest living heroes, and I rejoiced that Mr. Adams had been elected President; and all these gentlemen were called Whigs, while the other people, whom I disliked, were called sometimes Democrats; but when I had asked Mr. Garland what Whig and Democrat meant, he told me that a true Democrat was one who wished all the people to be equally free and happy.

"Then, I don't care," I said, "who calls me a Whig, I'm a Democrat. Don't Mr. Clay and Mr. Webster like that too?" I asked. He said he supposed they did, but men had different ways of thinking how the people should be made free, and so they were called by different names. I did not puzzle myself much in splitting party questions. I loved all the people, the poor and ignorant as well as the rich and wise, and wished they could all be equally happy and good, and for the rest I gave myself to worship the great men whom I admired, as heartily as I wished to.

CHAPTER XII.

"What! was I married to her in my dream?"

I LIVED at this time almost purely in the intellect, or my affectional motions swept so widely out over the great ocean of humanity, that individuals were of comparatively little importance to me. I began to wish very earnestly for more years, that I might have knowledge and a more independent existence. For the selfishness and violent temper still surrounded and hemmed me in—still cut off, and coarsely or fiercely ridiculed the expression of my thought. Mr. Radford married during the winter, and my mourning for him was happily mitigated, by the queer kind of interest I at first felt in his successor. This was a man of forty or forty-five years of age. He came along one mild January day, when I happened to be out of doors and witness his arrival, driving a pair of hornless oxen in a yoke. One of them had over his back a leathern portmanteau tied with two strings beneath. As he was passing slowly by the barn, where the men were at work, uncle hailed him. He stopped, and shortly after they came into the house. He was a darkish man, with a face which, look at it as I would, I could not understand. His name was very queer—James Dole. The word dole had been in one of the definition lessons I had learned while watching cream in the summer, and it puzzled me to see what propriety there could be in it as a name. However, I always doubted its being his real name; and he had such odd ways, and spoke in such a buried voice, that I sometimes almost doubted his existing at all. The oxen, too, seemed a part of the mystery. I had seen hornless cows—we had one—but never such an ox, and to have two together was doubly strange. All his clothing was in

the portmanteau. It was very little for a man, though he was not ragged. He never said anything in the house but to answer questions, and never used an unnecessary word to do that.

We, none of us, at least the young people, knew whence he came, or whither he would have gone if he had not stopped at our house. When asked the first question, he said he had been at work down here, jerking his head in the direction which he came from; but his manner and voice were so vague that I felt it must have been at the least several hundred miles away. He said he was going out yonder, and it seemed as if he must be thinking of a great extent of country, a thousand miles off, at least. For a considerable time he quite absorbed my attention, and my curiosity about him was troublesome to me, because I did not like to question him myself. Indeed I scarcely ever spoke to him. He wore no stockings, but a kind of leather case within his boots, and when he drew these off, sitting by the kitchen fire in the evening, with his short, black pipe in his mouth, his feet had such a strange look, that after bearing with it silently for several nights, I at length said, "Mr. Dole, don't you like to wear stockings better than such things as you have on?"

"No, not so well."

He did not speak surlily, so I ventured again,

"Why not?"

"These are warmer, and they don't want washing."

"But I should think they would," I said, my disgust rising. "If I wore such things I'm sure I should wash them."

"Well, that's just as people feel, you see," he answered; "you're different from me."

"Yes," I said, and I am sure my tone must have betrayed my thankfulness for the fact. I had a kind of dim belief that if Mr. Dole would talk freely, he would be very funny; but his odd, reserved ways, and his dirtiness more than anything else, for he was never ill-natured, deterred me from making any inquiries that could satisfy my interest in his past life. Among other

things, I had an intense desire to know if he had ever been married (it would seem, I thought, to identify him with the rest of mankind if he had), but my own courage was unequal to asking the question. I therefore elected to this delicate service a boy who was then with us in Albert's place. He was almost a man in years, but so stupid and easy that he was the standing target for all the random fire of verbal, practical jokes that we saw fit to entertain ourselves with. He had broad, blunt features, and a nose so prophetic of stagnation in the character it rendered, that I think no one ever dreamed of his changing or improving in the least degree. He would do whatever I asked of him—not that he cared to please me, but because he seemed to have no power of resistance; so I told him privately one evening, to ask Mr. Dole this momentous question, and when a favorable opportunity came, I drew near unnoticed to hear the answer. He was sitting beside, and a little behind the man when he spoke, and I felt myself flush deeply, as a party implicated, when, without a word of preparation, he drawled, in his unmeaning way, "Was you ever married, Mr. Dole?"

Thus interrogated, Mr. Dole slowly removed his pipe from his lips—turned his eyes rather than his head, to look at the questioner over his shoulder, and slowly, and very distinctly replied, "Not much." I made an extreme effort to suppress the sudden laughter I could scarcely restrain, but the boy looked entirely the same—straight into the fire, and said, in a quiet, assenting tone, as one does when an answer is expected from him—"h–m, I thought likely."

"Did you?" said Mr. Dole, with a shade more of spirit; "then the devil 's in you."

I smothered my mirth till I could reach the door, and even then had to choke it, for though I did laugh a great deal, and with an irresistible heartiness when anything really ludicrous appealed to me, I had to be restrained when I could not freely speak of the reason of my merriment. I had more difficulty when I went in again and saw the two grave, commonplace looking

faces there as quiet as ever, and for months, years—nay, even to this day—the memory of that occurrence, and of the countenances enacting it, will sometimes shake me irresistibly.

CHAPTER XIII.

"I walked as ere I walked forlorn,
When all the path was fresh with dew,
And all the bugle breezes blew
Reveille to the breaking morn."

Spring came on—the season of inexhaustible charms to me. I loved so dearly in the early sunny days to steal away to the creek, where the variety of budding foliage was so rich and exultant, that I felt gladdened in my inmost soul by the sight of it. The majestic maple, with its deep-folded and exquisitely tinted buds; the tender willow at the margin; the tasselled birch higher up; the butternut, the walnut, the light vines and the ground plants, sturdy and exuberant, pushing their strong leaves above the dark soil, seemed to have almost a social power in these days, and yet it was my loneliest season. My gladness was sad and tender, rather than boisterous or playful. I longed more for human companionship at this time than ever before.

One of the young Germans had left at our house a book he had been reading while there: the Letters of Hibernicus. I have never seen another copy, but I think it must have painted very vividly, in some passages, the full, vigorous life of spring-time; for I remember it impressed me as a book one could enjoy more at that season than at any other. It contained an extract from Moore's Translations of Anacreon—"To the swallow"—commencing:

"Once in each revolving year
Gentle bird, we find thee here."

I did not greatly admire it, but my longing for poetry caused me to accept, thankfully, anything above mere rhyme, that described nature as I saw it. The pastorals in the good old English Reader, which I had taken from home, were as familiar to me as the alphabet. "Day," in three parts; the "Cuckoo," the fine ode to "Contentment," and Dr. Beattie's "Hermit," so suggestive in thought, so grandly musical in construction, were part of my small stores of poetical consolation. Adjoining the yard in which the house stood, there was a small field which was never planted or sown. On the high bank which there bordered the creek, stood a few fruit-trees, apple and peach. For about half its length, this bank was precipitous, and the other half descended with a rapid slope, green, and thickly dotted with occasional trees and shrubs, to the very margin of the stream. There were beautiful spots on this slope, where glimpses of the water, and its rich, embowering foliage could be enjoyed, while one reclined in the shade of a great maple or nut-tree, and listened to the birds, and watched the sunlight dappling the elastic velvety turf. Being very near the house, yet entirely out of sight from it, and so beautiful, it was one of my commonest resorts, in moments of leisure. I called it "Sunny Bank," and when I was younger, had tried sometimes to imagine it a very romantic foreign country, containing great, and good, and loving persons, whom I could visit and talk with, and when my visions fell rather coldly back on myself, as they often did, I gladdened my heart with enjoying its beauty, such as it was.

The peach and apple blossoms were very fragrant above, when the evening dews descended upon them, and the soft sounds of the lazy current, gliding over its bed below, very soothing. As the field was never cultivated, no presence ever excluded me from "Sunny Bank," and very rarely did any one visit it but myself. But this spring, there came a company of gentlemen, living in tents, who set them in this little field. They were government engineers, surveying a route for a canal, that was projected from far southwest, to the Lake. The

officers had their tents, among the fruit-trees, on the summit of bank, while those of the laborers were further out towards the wood, on the open ground.

These men were all strangers to us; they were moving through the wild country, occupying different stations along the proposed line for a few days or weeks, and the detachments followed each other, so that when one party broke up its encampment, another came into its place the same day, or very soon after, and remained till the next succeeded. There were three detachments. The first consisted of five gentlemen, with their attendants, chain and instrument bearers, and axemen, for the country was covered with a dense forest, surrounding the "clearings," which included but a very small portion of it. They were out from morning till night, nearly every day. At evening they were gay either in their tents or our house, singing songs, smoking cigars, and telling stories; joking with each other, and sometimes if I were in their presence, teasing me into saying odd—sometimes, I suppose, saucy things. For I found very little pleasure in their noisy ways of going on. They did not care to satisfy my childish interest in anything, and I did not like being always bantered and laughed at, by people who never condescended to be earnest with me for a single moment. Two whom I remember, were my especial dread, Messrs. Ramsay and Turnbull. They were rollicking, headlong fellows, who invented all sorts of outrageous nicknames for me, and laughed at my indignation when addressed by them. They gave me the wildest and most preposterous answers to questions, trying to provoke me to sharp retorts. They attacked my self-love by all sorts of ludicrous disparagements, telling me sometimes that I was worth a fine horse—dead—and with skin off;—and at others, worth my weight in—onion-skins. Major Kearney, who was in charge of the whole work, was a more satisfactory person to me; but even his presence did not always restrain the spirits of the others. If I approached his tent, however, when he was alone, he would, if engaged, or not disposed to entertain

me, give me a dismissal that could not hurt my feelings ; or he would very kindly and patiently answer my questions till he wished to be alone, and then tell me so.

One day he said jocosely, "I am going away to-morrow—going to take the tents and leave you ; won't you be sorry ?"

"Not very, sir," I replied. "I shall be glad if you take Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Turnbull away, but please don't tell them I said so," I added ; for they had ways of annoying and trying to frighten me ; catching me up suddenly by the arms, and swinging me about, which my small stature enabled them to do with great ease. And I was afraid to meet Mr. Ramsay, who was the larger man, and very strong, anywhere near the low fence between the "camp" and the house, for he would pick me up and set me over it so suddenly, making such a mite of me, that I had many a time cried with pure vexation, at his indignities. If I said anything severe to him it only challenged hotter persecution, so I was obliged to restrain my tongue, generally, or if I indulged it, to flee instantly from his presence. Yet he was kind withal, for he made me occasional little presents, and if he went where there were stores in the course of his day's labor, was quite apt to bring me raisins or candy, and give it to me when aunt would know nothing of it.

Major Kearney told me that another party was coming to take their place the next day, or very soon; and that there was no one in it who would tease me as much as Mr. Ramsay had; that I should like Mr. Clarke who belonged to it, and Mr. Capron, and he thought that I would not be afraid of any of them.

I did not much care when they were gone, though it diminished so materially the amount of life near me. They had not interested my affection, nor won my gratitude more than could be expressed by a "thank you," nor satisfied the wants of my intellect, so that my interior life suffered little pain from their absence.

Their successors came on the third or fourth day, and it was

pleasant to see again the white tents among the green trees, and hear the sound of cheerful voices near us in the evening; but I did not become acquainted with them as I had with the others. There was no aggressive spirit among them to draw me on to expression, and so we met and passed quietly for some days. I was not in the least drawn towards Messrs. Clarke and Capron; the gentlemen whom Mr. Kearney had undertaken I should like, and I wondered a little at his saying it, but was fast settling back upon my old interests, my few books and my casual interviews with Mr. Garland and others.

One afternoon, before the gentlemen had returned to camp, I was taking a little tour among the fruit-trees, near their tents; and, fancying myself quite alone, I directed my steps towards the point at which I usually descended to the water. The walk took me beneath a low maple, whose wide-sweeping branches grew so unusually low, that when I stood beneath it, on a fallen one, I could, by the utmost stretch of my muscles, touch the lower leaves. Thus I was in the habit of measuring my height. The year before, I could not touch the leaves, nor when the first spring days of this came; but now that they were developed to their full size, I could seize the tips of a few of the lower ones between my longest fingers. I had been afraid that this branchlet would be broken off by somebody straying under it, and when I went down on this afternoon, I was truly vexed to find that it was gone. I said aloud, "That is too bad," and a man's voice answered quite near me, "What is that that is too bad?"

I was so startled by the sound, that I lost my balance on the small support I had stepped upon, and was in danger of falling, when a hand kindly took hold of my arm from behind, and sustained me till I fairly found my feet, and was able to look up to the face of my helper. Then I saw that it was a young man, the youngest person I had seen among these gentlemen. I had heard him called Henry, and by some sirname, also, which I had forgotten. I had never seen him in the house where the others

frequently came, but often by himself, walking or sitting, generally with a book. He seemed to participate but little in the gay talk of his companions, and had never spoken to me, so that I felt very shy and timid in this accidental meeting, and after saying to him that he had frightened me so much because I thought there was no one there, I was just turning to go up the hill, and back to the house, when he stopped me by saying, "You are the little girl named Lizzie, or Eliza; are you not, whom Mr. Ramsey knows?"

"My name is Eliza," I replied; "but I am called by many others, sometimes."

"Well," he rejoined, "I saw Mr. Ramsay yesterday, and he requested me to tell you that he has found the book you asked him about, and when he comes up he'll bring it."

"I did not ask him for it," I said, "because I don't really like Mr. Ramsay, and so I wouldn't, but he told me about it, and I did say I should be very glad to read it." It was some Arctic narrative, then, I suppose, recently published, which Mr. Ramsay, in almost the only rational moment I had ever found him in, had told me of, because I was extremely interested in the wonders of the Polar world. When he looked for it he had not been able to find it, but he said he had lent it to some of the "other fellows," he supposed, and he would be sure to get it for me. It did please me much to hear that I was to have it, for a book was the only treasure that I really coveted, and I felt quite rich in the thought of having one, so interesting for my own. I must have shown my pleasure in my countenance, for the young gentleman said, interrogatively, "You are very fond of books, then?"

"There is nothing in all the world I want so much," I replied. "You like them too, I think, for I see you very often reading."

"Yes, and I have several here that you might have; but they are not such as would interest a little girl."

I looked at the one he had in his hand. It contained all sorts of three-sided, four-sided, eight-sided, and circular figures, and seemed to be chiefly a dissertation upon the value of the first

six or seven letters of the alphabet. It was all mystery to me, and I handed it back, saying that I had rather read books about people, than about letters and figures only. So our talk spun out, I standing near him, as he lay upon the grass propping his head on his elbow. He was of a dark complexion, with a high forehead, well filled in the upper region, both in front and laterally. His mouth was large ; but his lips, flexible, full, and well cut, in clear, beautiful lines, had very sweet expressions when he spoke. I thought his mouth much handsomer when I was talking to him than before, but his other features had a certain ruggedness, which made me avoid looking much at them. This effect was heightened by the darkness of his aspect, and the heavy brow, projecting over an eye that *gloomed* upon me. It was not a lowering look ; on the contrary, I felt that he was a kindly person, and I was not at all timid or doubtful in his presence, which I almost always was, on first speaking to strangers.

I told him about my little treasures of poetry ; those which I had committed to memory, and of some that I did not like well enough. And he asked me to recite one that I liked best of all. I was at a loss for some moments to decide, even among the few at my command ; but at length, curiously enough, I chose one in which the despair of grief, indulged in solitude, is reproved by Faith, or Hope, or some of the comforting spirits. It was brief, containing only twelve or sixteen short lines.

When I had finished, he asked, "Is that the one you like best, of all that you know ?"

"It is the one I like best now," I replied ; but I could give no reason for my preference. I was rather surprised at this myself, when I fully understood it to be a fact, and it set me into a new train of thinking. I felt that there ought to be some reason for my choosing this little poem, and that I ought to be able to tell what it was. I had not then learned, that only critics or philosophical readers are expected to give a reason for the taste that is in them.

I did not again, for many days, see this young gentleman ; but I understood from his being generally called Henry, and

from his youth, and from his sometimes being left at camp when the others went out, that he was different from them in some way. Everybody seemed to like him so much, and spoke so kindly of him, and he was so fond of being alone, never coming into the house once, in the long days that he stayed in camp; and always, when I saw him, moving about the tents or walking among the trees, either with a book or looking thoughtful and serious, that I grew quite interested in thinking of him, and began to wish very much that I could get acquainted with him. But the more I thought about him the less I liked to approach him. It called up all my shyness, to think of walking out in the direction of the camp, at any time when I happened to know that he was staying there.

One day Mr. Ramsay came to see his friends in this party. He called in the house, and while there took the book which he had promised me from his pocket. Aunt was in one of her pleasant moods at the time, and, in my eagerness and very settled expectation of having it for my own, I stepped quickly forward when he showed it me, to take it and thank him. I stood very near her, and I suppose the pleasure that gleamed from my eyes, as I looked first into his, and then at the book, was more than she thought so small a creature ought to enjoy, for she gave me at the instant a sound box on the ear, and with one of her harsh epithets, bade me go into the other room, meaning my own sleeping-room.

I had not for some time, been so shamed and outraged in presence of a stranger, and it stung me deeply. I dropped upon a trunk that stood near the door I had passed through, and seemed to be shrinking away to nothing again, as in the old days, before I had known myself as I had of late; but I think I had not been sitting more than two minutes, when a thought came into my mind, that seemed to go through my nerves and muscles like an electric current; it energized and gave them their full size. Instantly I stood up, and opened the door to walk back. I did not even stop to say to myself, as I

had often before, when inclined to rebel against her tyranny: "She can only beat me, she dare not kill me;" but I walked straight forward to the seat I had before occupied, and sat down. It was a little back and aside, from herself and her visitor; but on hearing me, he turned so as to bring his face into my view. I looked clearly into it, for I felt clear, and strong, and said to myself: "Now I know I am right, for she had not been displeased before he came in. I had done everything she wished me to, so as to please her; if he chose to give me the book it was no business of hers; or, if she did not wish me to have it, she could have said so, without calling me an ill-name or striking me." She looked very black on my return, but I did not drop my eyelids before her, for I felt no quailing in my heart; I thought "I may as well do it now I've begun."

Mr. Ramsay's face bore an expression that puzzled and gave me uneasiness, after looking a second time at it. I had relied upon his seeing my view of the case, and this look did not satisfy me at all. He had the book in his hand, and turned it over and over, resting one end on his knee. His voice, too, had a kind of suppressed sound, not at all like the broad, full, jolly tones in which he usually spoke, and he talked as if he were thinking of something else. I was not used to seeing people suppress their anger, or I should have known what I afterwards learned, that these were indications of the pent up fire, into which his whole nature had been kindled, by what he had seen. He soon rose to take leave. Usually I was not included in this ceremony, unless by some good-natured taunt or half-insulting joke, but when he stood up now, I also rose, for I felt I would include myself; I would demand that attention.

When he had touched her hand, he turned to me, as if I also had been a woman, and taking my small fingers in his, he inclined himself slightly towards me, and said, very encouragingly and distinctly: "Good bye, Eliza, I shall come and see you again some day, my dear." He retained his hold of my hand one perceptible moment after the last word, and then walked

away, seeming to me a giant as he did so. For the first time I felt the strength I had dreaded, as a comfort and protection. In that instant I forgave him all the sudden pickings up and settings over fences, and the thousand annoyances by which he had before tormented me. He had not promised another visit to her but to me, and I felt as if all the strength and power were for me, and against her: for, by the leave-taking, I had received assurance that his displeasure was not against me. He had taken the book with him.

When he had passed beyond the house, and was out of hearing, she walked, menacingly, close to me, livid with rage, and in words that quivered from the intensity of her passion, demanded what I meant by coming back when she had sent me away. Her raised hand was over me while she waited my answer. I looked full into her flaming eyes, and said: "If you strike me, I'll tell him as sure as I live to see him." She had a strong love of approbation, and these were gentlemanly persons, of whom she saw too few in her wild, rude life there, to be willing to forfeit the good opinion of any. She dropped her arm, and, in the impotence of her anger spat upon me. It was not the first time, but it outraged me far more keenly than a blow. Every drop of blood in my body seemed to press into my head. I sat down while she stood. It was time now to come to some terms.

"If ever you do that again I'll tell every man and woman that comes to the house," said I. "I'll tell Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Clarke"—whom she particularly liked—"and Mr. Fleming," I added, with a lucky thought that he was living there, and would not be gone, as these gentlemen would, in a short time—"I will do it," I repeated, "I don't care what you do to me."

"What does thee mean with this impudence, thee little black wretch—thee nasty little beggar?" and she raised her hand again, but let it fall as before. "What does thee mean, I say?"

"I mean," I said, "that when I do everything you tell me to, as well as I can, and try as hard as I can to please you, I won't

be called names and struck, without letting people know about it. And," I added, taking courage from the sound of my own voice, "as long as I don't go to school, I mean to read books whenever I can get them, and have done all my work."

"Thy work never is done!" was the passionate answer. "It ain't done now. Go and get the broom, and sweep that dirt from under the chair there."

She pointed to a scrap of dried leaf or grass, that had been blown aside in the position she indicated. The house was always kept scrupulously clean; for, besides that she enjoyed keeping me constantly busy, she had the virtues of order and cleanliness. I did as I was told, secretly glad to escape without worse consequences of what, the moment after I had committed it, seemed to me my extreme rashness.

I had scarcely finished—she watching closely all the time—and received an order to bring water and put the tea-kettle to boil, though it was yet early in the afternoon, when, some one knocking at the open door, I looked up and saw Mrs. Radford. I always rejoiced at seeing her, not only because she was young, and pretty, and kind, and the wife of Mr. Radford, whom I remembered with so much grateful affection, but because her presence was a real good to me. She would do my tasks, if I were missing, and divert attention from the fact, and, if possible, from me, on my return.

I wished now very much to get out to the camp before Mr. Ramsay should leave it to return to his own, which was some eight miles away; and her presence insured me the opportunity to do so. I saw directly that she had come for an afternoon visit. Mr. Radford, she said, would be passing on his way from Creekville, the nearest town on the lake, towards night, and she had become so lonesome staying at home with no one to speak to, since the morning of the day before, that she thought she would come to our house and meet him. She half blushed when she said it, as if somebody might think it foolish; but I did not, and aunt said, in a mild tone, as if she had not, the moment

before, been in danger of spontaneous explosion, "Ah! that's the way with you young folks. It'll be different, by and by, when you grow older." I remember that these words, quiet as they were, seemed hateful to me; but as soon as I could get off, I left them, and went out to the camp.

The party was away; but there was one gentleman lame, from an injury to his foot or ankle, and I knew he would be home, and that Mr. Ramsay would be in his tent. It was the farthest from the house, and, as I approached it, I smelled the cigar, which was the unfailing indication of the presence of my new friend. He always smoked; and one of his ways of annoying me was, by blowing great clouds in my face sometimes, and at others, taking a cigar from his pocket, and offering it to me, with a polite gravity that both amused and vexed me to that degree, that I sometimes wondered how I could refrain from boxing his ears. The smell of the cigar made me almost fearful. I dreaded finding the old Mr. Ramsay, instead of the one who had just walked out of the house and been so earnest to me. As I drew near, I could not avoid hearing the words that were spoken. Some of them were profane, and others not at all complimentary to a woman whom they did not name. I walked rapidly forward, for I wished not to hear what I knew they did not intend me to, and made a slight noise as I came near the open end of the tent, to bring Mr. Ramsay out.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, almost in his natural tone, as he rose and came to the door, "here you are, are you, little one? I thought you'd be here. Not crying?" he asked, looking sharply at me. "She hasn't done anything to you, then, since I bade her good bye."

He had laid his hand on my shoulder, and so drawn me into the tent. Its other inmate I had never spoken to, and I felt so much embarrassed and restrained in his presence, that I could scarcely speak. Mr. Ramsay said, "I brought the book out with me, Eliza, because I wouldn't leave it with that d—d old——respectable aunt of yours."

"Will you leave it with Mr. Henry?" I asked. "I have spoken to him once or twice; and when I can have it, I will ask him for it."

"Yes; I'll give it to him for you. But, tell me, does she often do the sort of thing I saw to-day?"

I burned at the thought of having to acknowledge it, but answered, in a low voice, "Yes, sir—sometimes a great deal worse. But, Mr. Ramsay," I added, drawing quite near to him, "I don't like to talk of it before this gentleman. I don't know him as well as I do you."

"Well, that's quite right," he said, rising. "Come out a little way with me. I'll be back again, directly, Williams," he said, nodding to the person he left behind.

When we were outside, he took hold of my hand, as we walked along, and, seeming to measure me by clasping it in his large one, he said, "You are a very little girl, Eliza, to be living alone with that old"——

He paused some time, and, not seeming to find an epithet that suited his need, added, "I am afraid you have some hard times. She needs a great fellow, like me, to get along with her. I think if I lived in the house awhile, I could get her broken of those little indulgences. What did she strike you and send you away for, child, when I was going to give you that book?"

"Because," I replied, "I suppose she did not wish me to have it."

"Did she know what it was?"

"No."

"Well, then, why did she wish you not to have it?"

"Because she doesn't wish me to have any book to read."

"Why not?"

"I think it doesn't please her that I should be so happy."

He muttered something, but he was so tall and spoke so low, that I did not hear distinctly.

"What did you say, sir?" I asked.

"I said—never mind what I said. She made me very angry,

and perhaps it is quite as well you shouldn't know all I say. Did she do anything more after I came out ?"

"She offered to strike me, sir ; but I told her if she did, I would tell you."

"Did you ?" he said, proudly, with a small oath. "That was right. You're a brave little girl ! You'll get along. Tell her so next time, too. I wish she was a man for about five minutes," he said, shaking himself, as if the thought of what would happen if she were, set his muscles into involuntary play. "But a woman one can't punish, and an old woman that you can't flatter without lying so damnably !"

I was astonished at these words ; for I did not understand their meaning, and he seemed, while uttering them, as much inclined to laugh as to be angry. I was thinking if I had better ask him what he meant, when he suddenly called, though we were not in sight of anybody, to Henry. "This fellow," he said, "is always down here, in the bushes somewhere—the best fellow that ever lived, but always out of the way." We were on the slope, near my favorite tree ; but Henry was not there, nor did he make reply from below, where Mr. Ramsay evidently thought he was. He called again, louder this time, and a "Hallo !" came up, apparently from the very water-side.

"Ah ! there he is," said my friend. "Now sit down on the grass here a moment, because I want to speak to him. He is the very best fellow," he added, "among us all, and you'll like him better than any, when you get acquainted with him. He won't amuse himself with you as I have, and God knows I believe I shouldn't have done it myself, if I had understood that this was the way you get on in there."

Mr. Henry, as I called him, did not present himself at once ; and, in the meantime, Mr. Ramsay, in the restlessness of his new character, seemed to feel bound to talk to me without cessation. He did not question me further as to the difficulties of my position, but he mixed up denunciation of my oppressor with words of encouragement to me, and occasional lamentations

that she was not a man, in which case I was given to understand that he should have indulged himself in giving her "a devilish good whipping."

"Ah! is that you, Ramsay?" said Mr. Henry, coming in sight at the moment, and looking surprised and curious, at me.

"Yes, it is I, and somebody else, you see," he said, noting the look. "The fact is," he added, shaking hands warmly with him, "I've got myself into a *position*, in reference to my young friend here," looking, with a queer mixture of mocking and earnestness towards me, "and I want to turn it over to you. You're partly an idler, you know, among us hard-working fellows, and so you can afford to take little odd jobs off our hands, now and then."

Mr. Henry looked both surprised and amused at his friend, who said, "Come, sit down a moment, and I'll tell you. But first let me introduce you." And, with a serio-comic look, that annoyed me very much, while I felt myself made ridiculous by it, he said, "Dolly—I beg pardon—Miss Eliza or Lizzie, this is my friend, and your friend that is to be, Mr. Cranstoun."

Mr. Cranstoun came forward and shook hands with me, in a manner that I felt to be very equivocal. It partook, I fancied, too much of the mocking air, to assure me, in any degree, that I was being treated with genuine consideration, and he did not say a word about having seen and talked with me before. I looked at him, expecting that he would do so, but finding that he did not, I said, "Mr. Ramsay, I have seen Mr. Cranstoun before. I talked to him one day under that tree."

"So much the better," he said, as if my statement made no difference in his view of our relation.

"Now, Cranstoun, I must tell you, in dozen words what it is, and be off; I shall be late in, if I stay here much longer;" and so, first he told him of the book, and the reason why he could not give it to me, including a graphic statement of the scene in the house when he had offered it, and of his towering rage; and then of his wish that Cranstoun should occasionally go in and

notice me; "and make her feel," he said, "that somebody is observing what she does. She is the greatest old tyrant I ever saw—It will take me all the way home to get cool. I give you my word I have not been so angry since I left Washington. Now, my dear fellow," he continued, "I know you don't like to go among these people, but you will do it, won't you, after what I've told you? There's more, too, but"—and he looked at me in a way which said, "I can't say all in her presence, you know; and then," he added, aloud, "you're such a good fellow, so sober and steady, and all that, that I think you are just the man for this affair."

"I don't know," said Mr. Cranstoun, "that I can do anything like what you ask, but I can try. I don't clearly understand what you wish; the child looks as if she were hardly kept, certainly."

"Well, make yourself watchful," said Ramsay, "and good bye; and good bye, little one," turning to me. "Be brisk, and here's the Don Quixote who'll fight that old windmill in there, when she goes too far wrong." They laughed, and went together up the hill. But I did not feel satisfied, and clear about the state of my affairs, and I stayed still, meditating. Mr. Ramsay meant altogether well—I was quite certain of that; but his harum-scarum way of doing and talking were not suited to my systematic, downright, earnest notions. I thought, if he wished, in his good-nature—for which, with all my silent fault-finding, I felt truly grateful—to have engaged some possible protection for me, he should not have had me present. It remained on my mind unpleasantly, that both the gentlemen had seemed rather more amused than distressed at the case; for I could not see from their point of view, how strongly their proposed championship must have been tinctured with the ludicrous. It did not occur to me till years after, when the great sorrow of my childhood had

"Lost its bitter weight of woe"—

when the passionate grief with which I had mourned for one of those friends, had been mitigated by time, and by new affections, how preposterous the whole affair must have looked to them. If I had been gifted with beauty; if I had been well dressed, it would doubtless have amused them much less; but I felt certain that the two or three hearty laughs I heard at the top of the hill, were at my expense, and they made my blood boil.

I waited for Mr. Cranstoun's return, to speak to him, for, in my spirit, I protested against being thus made party to a solicitation of protection from a stranger. Where it came casually, I accepted it thankfully—if it had been asked without my knowledge, I should have been only grateful to both parties; but I could not beg it, which I seemed to have done in this case, by hearing all that had passed; and then the laughing decided me. When Mr. Cranstoun walked down the hill again after his friend had gone, he found me looking not the most amiable, I dare say; but he sat down with the book in his hand, and said in the pleasant manner of an old acquaintance, "I am sorry, Eliza, you can't have this now, as you want it so much, but do not fret about it; I will keep it safely, and you shall have it whenever you are ready. I shall go in and see more of your—what is it?—your aunt?"

"No, sir," I replied, indignantly; "she is not my aunt at all; I call her so because I can't bear to call her mother, though I am her adopted daughter. She is no relation of mine." And in answer to other questions, I informed him that I was motherless. Of my father I did not like to speak; the thought of him made me flush all over; I could not endure to say more than that he was living, but I had not seen him for more than four years—the time I had lived here. The genuine interest shown by my auditor, in the little history which I briefly related, quite drove the protest I had determined upon making from my mind. I told him of my great love for books—of the few I had read—how I had obtained them, and under what difficulties I had got through them; concealing bits of candle in my room and lighting

one after the other (matches were unknown to us), and sometimes being severely beaten when I was detected. I told him of Mr. Radford, Mr. Garland, Mr. Fleming, Albert, every one who had helped me; and how very gratefully I thought of them; and finally, that I had determined, since I had found I was not a fool, to learn all I could, in spite of her, and get to school some day.

When I had finished, Mr. Henry said very kindly, looking at me with eyes that glistened with earnest sympathy, "My poor child, I wish indeed that I could do anything to help you. I did not understand Mr. Ramsay as well as I do you."

"Mr. Ramsay," I replied, quickly, "doesn't understand me, sir. He has been very kind to-day, but before this he has always teased me so much that I could not like him. I am not angry with him now for anything he ever did, but he had rather laugh at me than teach me anything, and if you would be kind enough to let me ask you questions once in a while—you know so much, I should be very glad. I could learn a great deal if I had somebody to go to sometimes when I think of things that I wish to know."

"You may come to me whenever you wish to," he said, "and do not be afraid; nobody will tease you when you wish to speak to me."

This was a boon, indeed—an inestimable blessing; I could not express my gratitude in words, but my happy tears conveyed what my tongue refused. He was so entirely sincere and respectful. There was none of the banter and badinage which I always had to encounter from his companions, and I felt so wholly set at ease in his presence, that I said, "Oh, Mr. Henry, if you will always be so kind, I shall like you very much, and I shall never, never forget you."

CHAPTER XIV.

"The white kine glimmered and the trees
Laid their dark arms about the fields."

When I returned to the house from which I had been a much longer time than usual absent, even good Mrs. Radford's presence, though she was laying the table for tea, and insisted that she liked so well to do it, that she was very unwilling to let me finish, did not save me from a violent scolding, and two or three "casual" cuffs, when I happened to pass near my tormentor; but I did not feel them, for I was clad in spirit-mail. I did my household tasks; I drove the cows to the dairy-yard, and milked my number; I spread the supper-table, and cleared it away in a dream or trance. I moved about on my feet, and my hands did the labor, but I was not there. Mr. Radford did not come as was expected, and the first circumstance that penetrated my mind as a reality, that evening, was that Mrs. Radford was to share my large bed.

Her personal presence was always most agreeable to me. Her sweetness, and gentleness, and sincerity, were so apparent. I told her that I thought Mr. Radford must be so much happier living with her than with us, and that I was glad, though I often wished he was back again, for a little while. I asked her how old she was, and told her my own age; and when we found there were but seven years between us, for she was only seventeen, we both wondered very much, and I asked her if she thought, when I was seven years older, I should be married, and live in a house without anybody to scold and drive me? But I answered the question myself, before she had time, by telling

her that I was going to school, and did not intend to keep house and work, when I became a woman.

She expressed a great deal of sympathy for me, and told me some very kind things her husband had said about me. I asked her what flattery was, and what Mr. Ramsay could have meant, by saying about aunt, that she was an old woman whom he "could not flatter without lying so damnably." And then I learned what my hard and literal life had never taught me, that people often said kind and pleasant words to others which meant nothing; and that Mr. Ramsay would perhaps have tried to flatter aunt into good nature, if she had been younger or kinder.

"But what difference does the age make?" I asked, for I could not understand that.

"I hardly know," said Julia Anna; "I suppose he meant if she had been younger he could have liked her better, and then he could have said something that would please her without lying.

"I don't see," I said, "why her being old should make any difference about his liking her. I never knew any woman who was very old except my grandmother, and I loved her better than any young woman." Mrs. Radford did not explain these profound mysteries to me, and I fell asleep wondering over them, and thinking with inner gladness and trust on my new-found friend. I fully believed that he could explain everything.

When I rose in the morning I began to feel the precious value of the time that I could have with Mr. Henry. I knew they would remain only a few weeks, at most, and there were so many things that I wished to talk with him about. And first I wished to know how it was that, when the other gentlemen were never at camp in the day-time, unless they were ill or lame, or *calculating* (which, as I had found out, meant sitting at a table covered with papers, and being very busy indeed), he was so much of the time there. I determined upon learning this as soon as I saw him, for I was distinctly impressed that he was

not under the same necessity of duty that the others were, and I was prepared to be very much pleased with the fact when he should tell me it was so.

But alas for my anticipations! The thorough, vigilant, ill-nature of the next three or four days seemed incredible. I could scarcely get out of doors, but in her sight. I could not speak but I was railed at. I could not be silent but it was demanded of me why I was sullen and sulky? And yet, for the first time in my life, I think, I was endeavoring to be hypocritically pleasant. I was taxing my utmost powers of accomplishing—to gain, if possible, a little time. But I could not even approach it in prospect, for accumulated tasks were kept before me from morning till night. I was three or four deep in them all day, and so discouraged before night, that I could have wept in sheer despondency. This was revenge for my independence on the day of the book affair.

In these times I was very little given to tearful bewailing of my lot; I had strong resolution within, and a trust in, I knew not what, but something—which, though they occasionally threatened, in extreme emergencies like this, to fail me—very rarely did do so altogether. I said, too, mentally, while I was submitting to her tyrannous exactions: "She doesn't beat me as much as she used to. I have gained that at least." But before two days were at an end, I almost wished she would take the shorter method of blows to sate her evil passions, the slavery was so very trying when I so much desired to be free. Mr. Henry came in, the second evening, with another gentleman. They both spoke to me, with noticeable purpose, I feared, and it soon proved so, by my being ordered peremptorily to light a candle and go to bed. I had the satisfaction, however, of hearing them depart soon after I left the room.

Uncle, who had been a long journey in the early part of the summer, had returned a few days before this, and when they were gone, I heard him say to his wife: "Phebe, I wouldn't have sent Eliza to bed so soon, I saw the young man look at

his friend when you spoke to her, and I think they notice what I have often told you, that you are very harsh with her."

"Let 'em notice and be—hanged," she said, her temper rising instantly. "I am not afraid of 'em, tho' I might be if I was as good-natured a fool as thee is. What do I care what they think, or how they look? I'll do what I've a mind to with the little brat, for all them. She's getting very independent with them to notice her, and I'll take it out of her, I'll warrant thee. She wouldn't be worth her salt if I let her have her own way."

"I wouldn't recommend letting her have her own way," said uncle, when the torrent of her speech was checked, "but you often speak very harshly to her when she is doing nothing to deserve it, and she is getting old enough now for people to notice it. They always have, you know, even before this time." The door of my little room was ajar, and as I lay at the extreme front side of the bed, I could look upon them both, as they sat on opposite sides of the small stand, at which she continued her sewing, till he had nearly finished his last speech. Every word he spoke increased my astonishment, for her choler was visibly rising, and still he kept on till, for once at least, he appeared to have said all he began to say. I thought: "What has happened to uncle? Is he going to take my part too?" But the burst of passion that followed, soon smothered the intention, if he had entertained it at first. She raged vehemently for a few minutes, and finally wrought herself up to the point of seizing a small stick of wood from the hearth, and hurling it in the direction of his feet.

There was silence after this act till he spoke, raising the missile at the same moment, and said: "If you had thrown that harder you might have done me a serious injury. A splinter has gone through my stocking and pricked the top of my foot as it is."

"I wouldn't have cared if it had hurt thee," she replied, in somewhat gentler tones. "Thee had no business to talk so like

a ninny to me about that young one. I'm sure she's more trouble than forty like her would be worth, and people are noticing her so much now, that she don't pretend to mind, only when she pleases ;" and she went on to relate to him the story of Mr. Ramsay's visit and the book. She told it truthfully, and he heard it without comment. Soon after they retired, and I thought, as they went, that "uncle had better not have said a word for me, for she had silenced him, and I was sure she felt that she was right and he wrong." I did not wonder that he had always left me to make my own way through my troubles.

The next day they were to pay a visit about three miles distant, and there was a debate in the morning what should be done with me. After his unsuccessful venture of the previous evening, he left her to decide the question herself, which she did, by finally determining not to take me, and by issuing orders respecting the disposition of my time during the day, that would have filled a closely-written sheet. My secret joy at this decision was intense, for I could get the book, and have a whole day in peace, to read it, or talk with Mr. Henry, if I wished to. When they had gone, and I had seen them so far away as to feel quite assured there would be no returning, I literally flew through my tasks. I cleared the breakfast things, and set the house in order, with a quickness that surprised myself. I was so constituted that I could not neglect what I knew I ought to do, but when that was done I ran out to the camp, and fortunately finding Mr. Henry there, got the book. I explained to him that I had the great happiness of being quite alone all that day, and that I should, perhaps, after reading a while, wish to come out and talk with him, which I was cordially invited to do—"Or," he said, "I will come in, by and by, and see you. When there is nothing to hinder," he added, playfully, "gentlemen should call on ladies, when they wish to see them. I will call and see you in the afternoon."

I walked in, thinking about this all the way. There was such

a difference between the pleasantry of this little speech, and any other that had ever been made to me. It seemed to elevate, instead of depressing me, in my own esteem. I thought: "He will teach me something that little girls know, who have ladies to teach them." I was very desirous to learn them, and I thought so much about it that I changed my dress to receive the expected visit. My clothes were rarely dirty, for that condition I could not endure, and, as I have said, cleanliness was among the few virtues that were exemplified in the daily life of our household; but my garments were very often torn, generally scanty, and of the plainest home-made fabrics. Mrs. Sanford had, at that time, woven nearly every dress I had had. They were some kind of striped, or plaided linen, or cotton, or tow cloths. But I was now the possessor of a print frock of two shades of blue, made fuller and larger than the commoner ones, and this I put on to receive my visitor in. I made a careful toilet altogether, brushing my hair, cleansing my teeth with table-salt, upon a bit of linen, and attending to all the minor points of adjustment that I could remember, as belonging to the process of dressing, as I had seen it. It took possession of my mind so thoroughly, that by the time I was ready to sit down, I felt much less interest in the book than I had before. I looked at the great watch hanging above the mantel, and saw it would be yet some two hours before the camp dinner would be over, and I knew that Mr. Henry's afternoon did not commence till that event was past.

CHAPTER XV.

"That voice re-measures
Whatever tone and melancholy pleasures
The things of nature utter; birds or trees,
Or where the tall grass, 'mid the heath-plant waves
Murmur and music thin, of sudden breeze."

When my visitor came, he had in his hand a small volume, curiously bound, in what I now know is called embossed binding. It fastened with a clasp of gold, and its leaves were of thick, fine paper, gilt edged. It was a book of pictures, and each leaf had a fine one upon it, which Mr. Henry told me to call engravings. He explained the difference between paintings and engravings, so that I understood it quite distinctly. He told me that, "the man who paints a good picture must have more genius and love of his work, than the one who makes a good engraving." These pictures were copies of some of the finest paintings in the world. There was a woman and child, I remember, of such pure and exquisite beauty, that my eyes filled with tears while I looked at them. I asked who they were? and he told me, "it was Mary and her son Jesus, and that the name for her, in picture, was Madonna." I thought they were likenesses, and I said: "If that is Jesus and his mother, I don't believe a word of what *she* says about them."

"What does she say?" he asked.

I was ashamed to tell him that, as far as she ever taught me at all, it was to despise these persons; and that she called Jesus a thief and a liar, and said his mother was a very bad woman. But I did utter it all, somehow or other, and added, "But if she was so beautiful and kind looking, it cannot be true, can it?"

I raised my eyes to his face when I asked the question, and found his fixed upon me, with so earnest and searching a gaze, so full of pain, so expressive of being shocked by the coarse, hateful thoughts, though I had conveyed them in the gentlest language I could command, that I was frightened, lest I had fatally wounded the interest he felt in me. I wished to say something, but could not; and when my eyes fell again on the pure faces which were still before me, I burst into tears. Partly it was the effect of the heavenly countenance of the mother, and partly the reaction of my own wounded reverence, which his look seemed to kindle into keen, sensitive life.

"Lizzie," said he, "do you remember your own mother?"

"I remember her a very little," I answered; "only twice while she was able to walk about, and once when she lay sick in bed; and then," I added, with a kind of creeping awe, "when she was dying."

"Do you think she would have taught you such things?"

"Oh, no," I replied; "for one of the times that I remember her, is when she was taking me to meeting. Oh, no; my mother was a good woman—very good, indeed!"

"Well," he said, "do not believe anything of this sort, that she teaches you, which you think your mother would not have taught you. What a dreadful condition," he added, seriously, after a moment, "for a little girl! Have you no friends who would take you out of it?"

"I mean to get out of it myself, when I am a little older."

"But you told me the other day that your father was living—where is he?"

"He is in New York," I replied, "but"——. I could get no further. All the tenderness of my nature was roused by these recollections and the shock I had given myself, and I quite broke down, at the last word, in a shower of tears.

When I had recovered a little my self-control, Mr. Henry said, very kindly but seriously, "I wish to ask you one or two

more questions, child, but if you cry so, you will not be able to answer them."

This appeal had the effect he intended. I instantly felt that it would not do, and dried my tears and choked my sobbings, and said, "I'll answer anything you ask me, Mr. Henry; but it makes me grieve to remember my mother, and to speak of my father. That was why I cried."

"Have you any brothers?"

"Yes, two; and one of them is named as you are—Henry."

"Well, now, call me Henry, and not Mr. Henry any more; and think I am your brother, and talk to me as if I were. I wish to ask you about your father. Do not cry now, but tell me, if you can, why he leaves you in this place."

"He does not know," I said, "that it is so bad. She will not let me send a letter to my sister, without her first seeing it, and then I can't tell them about her at all."

"If he knew all about it, do you think he would come for you?" he asked.

I had no longer any way of evading what I shrunk from with inexpressible pain. In spite of myself, tears of wounded pride and real anguish overflowed my eyes. I looked appealingly at him, and he took hold of my hand very gently, and said, "Poor child! I am sorry I have pained you so much. If there is something you do not wish to tell me, let us forget all about it, and talk of other things. Let us look at the pictures again."

"Oh no," I said; "I will tell you all; but I wouldn't any one else, not even Mr. Radford.

Then I expressed the reverential affection I had for my mother. I told him how we all loved her, and grieved at her death; how I had since learned that my father's cruel neglect of her had hurt her so much; and how a woman whom everybody thought very wicked, and who was said to have almost killed my mother, had been with her when she died, and stayed with us afterwards, and my father had been very kind to her; and how, when I used to expect my mother to come back out

of her grave, to see us, my sister, who was older, told me she would never come while that bad woman was with us; and how, on all these accounts, I could not help thinking my father very wicked, and could not love him at all, though he was my father.

"And you would not like him to come for you, if some one should write and tell him how ill you are treated?"

"Oh, no," I said, almost alarmed at the idea; "no, not my father. I wouldn't live with *her* again, and she is his wife now. She is—Mary wrote it, in her last letter."

My friend sat silent for some time. "It is very difficult," he said, at last. "I wish I could talk to my mother about you."

"Is your mother very good?" I asked.

"She is the best and kindest woman living," I think. "She would know just what to say to you, and what it was best to do; for it seems as if something should be done. I am sure Mr. Ramsay had very little idea of what he was talking about, when he spoke to me the other day."

"Oh, no," I said, "Mr. Ramsay doesn't know at all how much I wish to learn, nor how something grieves me, and I should never tell him, if he lived here all his life."

"Well, Eliza, you cannot always live so."

"I don't mean to," I replied. "I am going to school as soon as I get old enough to get away from her."

"How old are you now?"

"I am past ten."

"Past ten! That is not a very great age, though you seem to think it so much. But you are very old for those years, child. Except for your size, one would think you were at least twelve or thirteen."

I said: "Mr. and Mrs. Garland think that is because I have had no children to play with, and have read papers and books so much, that are made for grown people. I haven't had any others to read," I added, by way of excusing myself; for I

thought it must look very badly to him, and I was anxious that he should approve me.

"I see," he replied, apparently very much occupied with his own thoughts; and I remained silent a long time. At length he said, "Let us finish the book. You have only seen a few of the pictures yet." And he went on telling me, as he turned the leaves, what the buildings were famous for, where the landscapes were, and if any historical event was connected with them, and so on. I was quite conversant, for a child of my age, with physical geography. I had brought a small class-book from home—not a baby geography, but one for advanced classes—and had read it through so many times that I could have recited almost from the title-page to the "finis." This helped me to understand his explanations much better than I otherwise could have done.

There was a series of views of the lakes of Scotland, of exquisite beauty, that affected me deeply. The miniature sheets of water, nestling lovingly between the towering mountains, the foliage that margined them, seeming almost to quiver in the still air, very nearly wrought me to tears again. I grew sad looking at them, and when they were all passed, I begged to turn those leaves again; for I did not care for fine churches or palaces after them. I asked Mr. Henry if there were such beautiful places anywhere else in the world, and he told me of a great many, in India, in Italy, in Spain, in Switzerland, and in our own country.

He had a dreamy way of talking about it, which made it seem a reality to me. I could almost see the places he described—the rivers sweeping tranquilly on between banks laden with foliage; the glassy surface, reflecting the trees and leaves, as I had seen them in our own creek; the little lakes, nestled among hills; the immense, towering mountains, buried in snow and ice; the plunging cataracts; and the great ocean, the grandest and most awful mystery of all, with its huge whales, and seals, and lions—its millions of lesser inhabitants, and that

awful treasury, which I imagined to sleep in its depths, of broken ships, guns, weapons, gold, jewels, books, and those who had once read them.

That was a memorable afternoon. It seemed to have feasted my memory for all time. I thought, there cannot be much else besides all this, to remember and think of. On the other hand, it made the return to my commonplace life so much more repulsive and wearisome than it had been before, that it required the heroism of a martyr to nerve myself to it. And it was time I should; for the afternoon was wearing towards evening, and I had too keen and abiding a sense of the terror of that return that should find me with unfinished tasks, to forget them, even in this great pleasure.

At last I said, "Mr. Henry, it is getting late, and I shall have to go for the cows. Aunt would be dreadfully angry if she knew I had sat so long, but I shall not tell her that you came in."

"What if she asks you, Eliza?"

"Oh, she won't think of it," I replied; "but if she should, I would tell her the truth."

"That is right," he said, apparently well satisfied. "Never tell her a falsehood."

"I never do," said I; "she can only punish me, if she is ever so angry, and I get over that; but I should feel very bad for a long time, I think, if I told what was not true."

"Yes," he said; "you have enough to suffer without that. Never, on any account, try it. But do you think it would be any better for you if I sometimes came in, and talked to her and to you, when she is here?"

"I cannot think whether it would or not," I replied; "she doesn't like people to talk to me at all. She always says, even now, that I am a fool when I speak much; and the other day, when a strange gentleman was here, talking with uncle, and they called me to ask me a question about the debate between Mr. Hayne and Mr. Webster, she was very cross, though I only

answered just what they asked, and went right away to my work. Sometimes she gets angry about things she hardly notices at others, and I don't know what she would do if you came in."

"I think I shall try it," he said, "for I should like to talk with you sometimes, and I should like to feel that nobody would object to it, or punish you if it were known."

He took his leave, cautioning me to put Mr. Ramsay's book away lest it might cause me trouble. I concealed it carefully in the bottom of my little trunk, changed my frock hastily, and, with that chilly kind of heart-sickening, so terrible to the young spirit—oh! how many times I felt it there—stepped forth again to the dull, repulsive routine of my hateful life. I no longer loved the cows and the poultry; the places that I had thought beautiful, were robbed of their charms, they were not like the pictures. There were far more beautiful birds and trees elsewhere than them, and I thought, "I shall never be happy again with these."

I shed some tears as I walked over the unsightly pasture, filled with charred stumps and trunks of fallen trees. The little dark stream, which issued from the swamp that I crossed every summer evening, on the body of a small tree, quite disgusted me by its familiar placidity and blackness. There was neither newness nor mystery in it. I was suddenly grown too large for my environments. The external limitations which had before seemed only very wearisome, were made insupportable, by what those few hours had revealed to me. How should I ever attain the freedom to enjoy what I now knew the world contained for me; for Mr. Henry had said that the beauty which God had created, was for every soul that loved it; and that people would grow, not only wiser but more beautiful themselves for loving and seeking beauty. I thought he meant by this to comfort and encourage me, "but how," I asked myself, "am I to grow handsomer if I can never see what is beautiful, and be made happy by it?" I determined to ask him distinctly about this, for I was

now very desirous to know if I could cause myself to grow handsomer. Such burning flushes went over me now, at the recollection of the undisguised surprise which my ugliness called forth. I could remember meeting one day, long ago, a man and woman riding along in a little covered carriage; the road was sandy, so that the wheels made no noise, and I heard the woman say, "What a homely child! I never saw another so ugly." It did not hurt me then, but I remembered it, and similar remarks now, with agony of spirit; and I felt that driving and milking cows, and sweeping floors, and washing dishes, and bringing water, would never help me to what I so longed for. Oh, how intensely miserable I was!

CHAPTER XVI.

——"Then black despair—
The shadow of a starless night was thrown
Over the earth, on which I moved alone."

——"Made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy."

Mr. Henry was out with his party the next day, and the next; but on the third he came in, and I thought took pains to make himself as pleasant as possible to aunt. The sound of his voice, bringing back the memory of the delightful hours when I had sat uninterruptedly by him, listening to those sweet and grand utterances that had breathed a larger life into my soul, gave me the keenest pain. I hid my face, lest the shadow of my deep emotions should be visible on it. He talked to her about the country, and their labor in it; and her husband's journey, and their early settlement, when the forest was almost unbroken; and expressed sympathy for her in the rude, hard life she had had. I was surprised, for I had not often seen anybody who

seemed to make himself so entirely agreeable to her. She was in her sweetest vein, when he said, "You must, indeed, have seen many sad days, and have been more lonely, as you had no children about you. How long have you this little girl with you?"

"About four years."

"She seems a quiet, old-fashioned little thing; but even her presence, I suppose, may at times have been a resource to you, when alone."

"Yes, she is better than nobody about the house; but she makes me a great deal of trouble; she is idle and lazy, and loves to read better than to do anything else; so that I have great difficulty to keep books away from her."

"Oh, yes; when you wish her to do something else, that must be very troublesome," he said, turning to me with a look of slight rebuke. "You should not read when you ought to be at work, Eliza; but when the work is done."

"I don't expect her ever to read much, while she is here," was the decisive reply to this attempt at a reasonable view of my case. "I don't intend she ever shall; when I get ready she will go to school, and then it will be time enough for her to get hold of books."

"But," said Mr. Henry, in a cold, indifferent tone, as if he merely argued the point, but cared nothing about it, "a young scholar is very much helped in study by general reading; it prepares the mind for the sharper appreciation of the school, and gives one ideas—which one is always better for having."

To this she replied in words and tone which burned themselves into my very heart's core. "That is very likely; but I didn't bring this child here to educate her. If I had wanted one for that purpose, I should not have got a simpleton, like her, nor a fright; but I promised to send her to school, and *they* are always writing about it, so I suppose she'll have to go, by and by. I got her to help me, not to be waited on herself. If she was as bright as other children, I should have more

patience with her; but she talks about everything, whenever there's a chance for her to speak, and about a hundred things that she can't know any more of than of the cows she milks. Some children," she added, after a pause, "seem to be born for one thing, and some for another; but I'm sure I don't know what she was born for, unless it was to torment me—and work. She does one all the time, and she'll have to do the other as long as she is with me."

In the commencement of this conversation, I had turned so as to conceal my face from the speakers, for I did not wish her to see any signs of emotion in it. Every word—every syllable of it had fallen on my spirit, with the distinctness with which particles of molten lead drop from the overflowing mass. I expected, too, at every word to hear myself ordered from the room, and I was so much excited between the hope, and the chilling dismay —between wonder at being permitted to remain, and dread of being noticed enough to be sent away, that by the time she had said her last words, my head seemed to have distended immensely, and to ring, as if its walls were metal, with the rush of blood, and the vibrations of nervous excitement. I could not help hoping, when my friend began to speak, in his quiet, reasonable way, that she would admit something of what he said, if only a very little, it would have so encouraged and quieted me; but she could not be further from it, except that his entire courtesy gave no provocation to her passion. She did not rage as she was always used to, in speaking on most subjects that interested her personally, and on which she differed from her interlocutor, but cool and calm as the day around her she announced her diabolic purpose; it was worse than her fury, which, however shocking and terrible, one always knew would, by and by, abate.

Henry remained silent for some time; so long, that my head began to subside, and my heart to beat less heavily, before he spoke. I should have left the room to escape the pain, but I could not have done it unless commanded, without hearing his

next words. I thought, "Now, when he speaks again, I shall know what he is." Without knowing what the position, or my own mind demanded of him, I felt, that, if after that rude speech, he dared another word for me, my soul would bow down in worship of him.

When he spoke, it was in this wise, with the utmost courtesy, but with a deep tone of elevated sincerity: "Pardon me, Mrs. Smalley; I can quite understand that it may seem presumptuous in a young man like me, a stranger, to speak to you on a subject which concerns you alone, or at least, chiefly; but my father and mother have taught me always to speak what I earnestly think, and I trust you will not impute to me, in what I am about to say, any intention to offend. I have been at leisure a good deal, since we have been in this encampment, and having little to interest me, and being very fond of children, I have several times spoken to Eliza—indeed, one day I kept her through quite a long talk, and her intelligence and power of thought seemed very striking to me. I must differ from you in thinking the child simple; she seems, on the contrary, remarkably bright; in some directions, especially so."——

"Yes," she interrupted, "she knows a great deal too much of some things, and not half enough of others."

"Perhaps that may be in part owing," suggested my advocate, "to the want of a child's education and reading. She has had what men only read, and so expresses men's thoughts, which seem out of place and unnatural in a girl of her age, but one cannot soberly conclude that for that reason she is deficient in understanding. I take the liberty of saying this to you, madam, because, as I said, I love children naturally, and I am inclined, when near a child, and not otherwise occupied, to try the young spirit and prove what it is. I trust I have not given offence."

"No," she replied, in a dubious tone, but with a promptness that reassured me; "Oh, no; thee hasn't offended me. I don't agree with thee at all, and it isn't of consequence enough

for any more talk about it. If she lives, it will be seen which of us is right. I have no doubt about it now, but it's not likely that thee will ever know, and so it makes no difference how much thee is mistaken."

Great God! how my soul seemed to wither and die at those words, and that tone which so dismissed me my life, my being, my hopes, my purposes, all that was of me. I could not stay for another word, but I crawled, rather than walked, out of the nearest door. I went so silently that, as Mr. Henry told me afterward, they did not hear the sound of my going. I was utterly broken down, dissolved to tears; my self-respect, my resolution, my courage, all gone. I walked away to the great maple, by the spring, and seated myself between its roots, beside the little stream, and my tears mingled with the senseless waters. Never had I been so wholly disheartened. Never had the life before me seemed such a dead level of hopelessness. Cold, nerveless, paralyzed, I sat; my very anguish so negative in its character, that it was more akin to death than life. I know not how long I had been sitting, my head drooped forward, my hands clasped over my aching knees, that felt as if they would never again support me, when I heard my name called, in a sharp, warning tone, which at least served the purpose of partly recalling me to life. I cared, indeed, little for any punishment that might be inflicted on me then, but my obedience to that voice was almost involuntary. It moved me, as the galvanic battery stirs the muscle and nerve, that are no longer warmed and propelled by the vital presence. I rose and ascended the hill. There were no voices in the house. Henry then was gone, and in becoming conscious of that fact, I realized that there was yet something positive to me in the world. The thought of him recalled, in some measure, the natural warmth and action of life. I moved with less effort. I spoke, and my voice was not sepulchral, as I knew it must have been a moment before.

She inquired where I had been?

"Down along the bank," I replied.

"What did thee go there for?"

"Because I did not like to stay, and hear you and Mr. Henry talk about me; that was all. Shall I put the tea-kettle on?" I asked, anxious to have no more words on that subject.

"No, it is not time yet. Thee can get the comb, and comb my hair a while."

This was an occupation to which I could always be called, for she had a curious love of having me stand behind her chair, and busy myself about her head. A tranquil state of mind was always the result of these manipulations. In a few minutes after I commenced, she would begin to sing, in a tolerable voice, snatches of poetry and old songs. She had no tunes, but the sounds were musical, and the pleasanter to me, because I felt no dread when hearing them; so that, in common times, I liked the occupation, and its results, well enough to feel seldom displeased when called to it. On some of these occasions she had even talked with me quite pleasantly, and gone so far as to laugh, now and then, at something I said. But those were rare spots in my life, and as they never touched my heart, I remembered them more as a wonder than a pleasure.

I now pushed my low foot-stool behind her chair, stepped upon it, and commenced my task. It was, indeed, one, at this time, for I could not remember ever to have felt so repelled from her. Every touch excited the deepest repugnance of my nature, and at last I was compelled to say: "I feel very sick, aunt. Will you let me sit in the door a little while?"

"Why, what's the matter, now?" she exclaimed, turning in her chair to look at me. She laughed heartlessly, as she caught sight of my face, and said, in her favorite phrase, when she was slightly amused: "Well, of all things, thee really looks pale."

This had reference to my very, very dark complexion, and the sun-tan that was upon my face, because no pains were ever taken to provide me with bonnets. I was indeed very dark, but I felt that none of the misfortunes, which she had brought upon me,

ought to expose me to her ridicule, and her unfeeling laugh grated on my unstrung sensibilities so harshly, that, without waiting for her permission, I stepped, or rather staggered, away, and dropped upon the sill of the front door.

She remained sitting, but asked me, not savagely, if I had a headache, or was sick at the stomach? and on being answered, "No;" she said, "What does ail thee?"

"I feel cold and heavy here," I said, laying my hand on my chest, "and I can hardly breathe." In truth, my breath came with such extreme difficulty, that I thought I was going to die. I had a harrowing recollection of my mother's last struggles for breath, and I thought this must be the same. I threw myself over, on the floor, actually gasping.

"Aunt," I said, faintly, "I believe I shall die, as my mother did." I was terrified, for love of life is generally strong in the young. She must have been a little startled, for I was aware that she approached me, and when I opened my eyes I found her standing over me. Her face betrayed excitement and alarm, but no tenderness or compassion softened its insensitive lines, or irradiated its common, hard expression. The spasm, or crisis, or whatever it was—doubtless, the extreme ebb of the magnetic tide of my being—passed away, and the refluent current came slowly back. I breathed more freely, but lay prostrate—as the waste weed which the sea has rejected and tossed, in its scorn, upon the sands. So I was rejected from the great moving and pulsating sea of life. There was neither care, nor love, nor tenderness, for me. Presently my eyes began to fill with tears, and I sat up and asked permission to go out a little while. It was granted. I made still another desperate effort; it seemed to be for life.

"May I go out to the camp, and talk with Mr. Henry awhile?"

I felt that she turned her face towards me, with a sharp glance, though my eyes were not upon her. I looked steadily out upon the turf, because I wished that she should not see my tears.

"What does thee want to talk to him for?" she inquired, shrewishly.

"He has some pictures," I said, "which he told me the other day he would show me, and I should like to see them now." This was an evasion. I did not care for the pictures. I only felt that if I could speak to him, and hear him say something kind, it would take the icy feeling away. If I could speak to anybody besides her—to the cook, even, if I did not see Mr. Henry, for he was always good-natured and friendly to me.

It was some time before she answered me, and then she surprised me, by giving the permission I had asked, but told me not to stay very long. I did not start at once, for I still felt very languid, but at length I rose to my feet, and walked so slowly away from the door that she recalled me, and told me I had better go to bed.

"Oh, aunt," I said, "I feel as if I could not breathe in that little bedroom. I had rather be out of doors. Besides," I added, "I feel a little better now, only my legs and back are very weak."

"Well, thee may go out," she said, "but don't talk about things thee doesn't understand, nor about me. Little girls should never talk about older people."

"I will not," I said, and I meant it, for nothing could possibly interest me less. When I reached the tent, I spoke outside, as was my custom, and, being invited to enter, I presented myself before the door, and saw my friend sitting upon a chest, with a table before him, and two or three books lying upon it. He came forward and took my hand, and said: "Eliza, what is the matter, that you look so very ill?"

"Oh, Mr. Henry," I replied, "I was very much frightened just now; I thought I was going to die, and when I got my breath again, I asked aunt to let me come out and see you."

He took a pillow from a hammock, that was suspended from the

tent pole, and, by some arrangement, made me a comfortable resting-place on the chest. Then he closed his book, sat down by me, and said: "What is it, Eliza?"

"I can't tell, sir; unless—I believe it must have been what she said to you when you were in just now." And I could not help clasping my hand upon his, as it rested on his knee, in acknowledgment of his kindness. I had, no doubt, a much higher appreciation of the heroism of his act than he had himself, for I knew what he had braved, in risking her insane anger, and he did not.

"You were very brave," I said; "but it did no good, and nothing ever will. Will it?"

"No—never," he replied. "I am very much troubled about you, Eliza; I know my mother and my father, too, would feel so much pity for you. My mother is almost an angel, she is so good and loving."

"And your father—he is good, too, isn't he?"

"Yes, as good a man as lives; but a good woman is so much better than even a good man."

"Like the Madonna," I suggested.

"Yes, like the Madonna."

"Will you let me see that picture?" I asked; "I think it would make me feel better."

He handed me the book, opened at that page, and I looked at it, but went on to say, that "if my father were good, too, as my mother was, I should ask you to write to him for me; but," I added, "bad as it is, I would rather stay here, only I hope I shall never feel again, as I did to-day." I attempted to explain to him how my life seemed to ebb out when she told him it was all the same whether I was a simpleton or not; and how I had crawled away to get by myself; and how I had wept in such abandonment of misery, that I knew nothing about the time till I was called; and how the extreme repugnance I felt to her person, had at last, it seemed to me, amounted to the

illness which had procured me permission to pay this visit ; and how I could not now remember a single person but himself to whom I could speak for comfort.

"Eliza," he said, "I am very much troubled ; I would do everything to help you, and I cannot see how it is possible to do anything for you, poor child."

His serious look impressed me with the hopelessness of my condition, even more than his words. I had won my way through many seasons of trial and depression, but never one so heavy as this, and as I thought of all that his words and looks, and my own mind suggested, my tears began to flow afresh.

"This will never do," he said, smoothing my hair on my temples, with the tenderness of a loving sister. "You must be courageous, and keep these tears back. Can you take a walk down to the water ?"

"I will try," I said ; and I did feel my strength very much restored, when I stood up and passed out of the tent, holding his hand. We went down the bank, beneath the boughs of the low maple, where I had first spoken to him, and to the very margin of the creek, where, beneath a willow, whose pendant branches, falling in graceful curves, laved their outmost leaves in the water, forming there a perfect bower, he had placed a block or log, that served for a seat. It was delightfully cool, and there was a freshness in the air of the spot, which, together with his gentle, assuring presence, seemed almost at once to reanimate me.

"Mr. Henry," I began ——

"Don't say Mr. Henry, any more, Eliza. I am your brother now—only a very poor, good-for-nothing one, who can do nothing for you."

"Oh, no, you are not," I said; "for though I have felt very bad to-day, worse, I think, than I ever did before, you have done a great deal for me. Do you know that it seems to me, if you had not spoken the last time, and told her you did not think me a foolish child—if you had not, I would almost as lief

you had died there. While I was waiting to hear you speak, my head rang so that I was almost deaf. I knew you thought it, and I thought if you didn't say it, I should never feel it was you, any more. You would have seemed to be somebody else in the same body. Oh, I am so glad, for now you will be always yourself, and I shall never forget you, or think of you as if you might be somebody else, just as well."

He looked very kindly at me, with a pleased expression, and said, "You are a strange little one, Eliza; I believe none of us understand you very well. But I want to say something to you now, that you must not forget when you feel disheartened and wretched again, as you have to-day. Do you see that very small stream that runs from the bank of black earth into this large creek?"

"Yes, I see it."

"Well, you see that it is darkened by trees and plants all the way, as it runs. It mingles with this water, and goes in shade a long distance, down to the lower meadow, yonder, where there are no trees growing. It has a dark passage, *but it gets into sunlight at last*, Eliza, does it not?"

"Yes," I said, already dimly comprehending his meaning.

"Well, child, your life is like that little stream; it is small, and feeble, and darkened now, by the overshadowing evil, which, at present, you cannot escape. But you will reach the light at last, as certainly as the little brook does. Remember this when a great sorrow comes to you again, for then I shall not be here to help you, even the little that I have to-day."

"Are you going so soon?" I asked, stifling the rising feelings that threatened my speech.

"Not so very soon," he replied; but I hope it will be long before you see another so sad a day as this has been. We shall be here, I suppose, two or three weeks yet."

How little was there in our thought of the sorrow that was so swift and awful in its coming, to both of us!

I sat some time silent, thinking about the water and my life.

At last, I said, "Henry, the water from that little brook gets into sunshine before it reaches the meadow. There is always a streak of light on the middle of the creek, and some of it may go there."

"That is quite true," he replied; "but it may also be in shade, or it may be in the light for a moment, and then go back. And so it is with you; you have streaks of sunlight, and then the shade comes again."

"Yes, it is sunshine now, while you are here; but I am afraid it will seem very dark, when you are gone."

"Well," he said, "you must then remember that the light will come again, sometime."

"I don't see how it can, for you will never come back, and I shall never love anybody else as I do you. Nobody else," I added, warmly, "would ever take so much pains to make me happy, and to teach me; and everybody else, even Mr. Radford, has laughed at me; but you never have—since"——I hesitated, remembering the scene with Mr. Ramsay.

"Not," he said, promptly, "since I heard Mr. Ramsay's account of you. Since you told me of yourself, I have never been amused; but I have pitied and loved you. I pitied you because you were so hardly treated; and then when I knew you better, I loved you, because you are so good, and wish so earnestly to be better. Do not change," he said; "be always as good a child as you are now, and as much better as you can learn how to be, and you will find people who will love you as I do."

"But," I said, "I don't care to find people to love me—that is—I mean—yes—I want everybody to love me; but if they did, it wouldn't pay me, if I lost yours."

"Do not fear but I shall always remember you," he said; "and if you are ever tempted to do anything that is bad, think how very much it would grieve me to know it. You will get away from this place after a while; but since you cannot go to your father, I do not see how it is to be done till you are much older."

I could make no answering suggestion, and my mind ran much on the simile of the water. "Henry," I said, "when the water gets below these trees, it runs only a mile or two in light, and then it is darkened again. When I get away from this place, and am a woman, to do as I please, shall I not have steady sunshine? I am sure I shall be very happy then, all the time."

"What, with all those poor, starving people in the world, that you have told me about; besides a great many millions more, that you have never heard of?"

A gigantic shadow seemed to shoot over and darken my future at once I reflected. Then I said, "Well, at any rate, I shall *be some* happy, for I shall be glad to work to help them; and then I shall not be quite miserable about them. I shall not be in the dark, if I do that, Henry."

"Did your mother live in perpetual sunshine, Eliza?" he said, after a long pause; "or that poor Mrs. Rumsey you told me of once?"

I was silent and oppressed. "I should not talk so, Eliza," he said, "to any other little girl of your age that ever I saw; but you are so peculiar, and are growing up under such strange circumstances, that I think it better you should look forward to life as it is; and I wish when trials come, after you are a woman, you should remember me, and that I told you of them. No, my dear Eliza, you will never see perpetual sunshine. I should say you are as little likely to as almost any one, for other people's sorrows will be yours, and I am afraid you may have some great ones of your own, that nobody can take from you."

"And is there no long happiness anywhere, to anybody?" I asked, despondingly.

"To very few in this life," he replied; "perhaps to none, but in the life beyond this—that we go to when we die," he added, in explanation.

"I know," I said, nodding my head.

"In that life," he continued, "if we have lived purely, and done good on earth, we shall find sunshine that is never darkened."

"Does your mother believe that, Henry?"

"Certainly," he replied, startled by the inquiry. "Why do you ask me so strange a question, child?"

"Because," I said, "*she* doesn't, and she speaks very ill of people who do."

When I said this, Henry took both my hands in his own, and his eyes glowed and darkened with the earnestness that stirred him. "Eliza," he said, "Eliza, that is the worst thing you have told me yet. Nothing could be worse than that. If you were cold, and hungry, and beaten every day, it would not be so bad."

He was very deeply moved, and we were both silent a long time. At length I said, timidly, remembering Mary Garland, "Is it so very bad?"

"Does she teach you that?" he at last inquired.

"She doesn't *teach* me anything," I answered, "except definitions, out of the spelling-book, and those I get while I am watching cream at the spring; but she always talks so, and I should be almost ashamed to have her know I thought of anything else, unless," I added, "I could *know* it was true, and then I shouldn't care."

This new difficulty seemed quite to overpower my kind friend. He remained so long silent, that I had time to note the lengthening shadows of the trees on the water, and remembered that I could stay no longer from the house. It was already late, so that I felt quite startled at the first thought, and said, "Oh, Henry, I am afraid I have stayed too long, and aunt may be angry." I was less disposed to do anything that might displease her, since she had shown me the little kindness of the afternoon, and I rose at once to go.

He said: "I am so much distressed at what you last told me Eliza, that I do not know what to say to you about it. You

must go now, I see ; but I shall talk to you again, some day, before we go away from this place. I wish, more than ever now, that I could speak to my mother about you. But whenever you hear her talking so wickedly, remember your own mother, and that beautiful Madonna ;—and, good night, child."

CHAPTER XVII.

——"Blessed mood,
In which the burden of the mystery—
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world
Is lightened."

The haying was not yet quite finished. There were workmen in the meadows, and I hurried to the house, thinking of the supper, and the milking, and the probable ill-nature I should have to encounter, from having stayed out longer than I intended. I went through the woodyard, and carried in an armful of sticks, for kindling the fire. When I entered, she looked up, but not angrily, and seeing what I was bringing, she said, "Yes, it's time the fire was made. Thee stayed too long."

"I know it, aunt," I replied ; "but I did not think of it till I saw the shadows of the trees getting long, and then I came just as quick as I could."

"Well, well, be quick and get the tea-kettle on, and then go for the cows. Thee's got over thy bad turn, hasn't thee?"

"Yes ; I feel well now. I can go very quick and drive the cows up."

And so cheered was I, by her good temper, and the fresh air of the golden-shadowed evening, and the pleasant recollections of the long, quiet conversation, that had not only given me ideas, but the assurance, more prized than anything else could

be, of an affection that seemed to render life, at its worst, bright, and under its better aspects, as now, quite glorious, that I felt in myself almost the capacity of flying.

Only one thought abated my great happiness, as I skimmed the pasture-field, where, a few nights before, I had been so utterly wretched. That was of the religious difficulty. For I could already find in myself a bearing towards the infidel side—not with anything like contempt for my beloved friend, such as had threatened my peace with the excellent Garlands, but with a certain sympathy and pity for the weakness or superstition, as I thought it must be, which led him to feel so pained about it. I had learned, from knowing the Garlands, that very good, and happy, and intelligent persons could be religious; but I found myself disposed to believe that they were mistaken; and I did not incline to the religious side, except in certain tender or sorrowful moods, that passed away and left me in the same hard *reasoning* state of mind. *She* rejected belief, she said, in everything that could not be proved to her. "And this, I thought, is doubtless the right way; but I am sorry she is not good with it."

My mind was not material in its cast. On the contrary, it contained the elements of a warm, and clear spiritual life. But it demanded ever the cause. "Why?" "Wherefore?" "What made it?" were the everlasting questions of my intelligence; and while the sentiments that would, if steadily appealed to, have exalted me to a sweet religious life, slumbered, except at rare moments, the spirit of inquiry never rested within me. Unconscious pride of intellect, therefore, inclined me to that belief which, proudly, though coarsely, claimed to give a reason for everything it asserted; and though I was sometimes, nay, often shocked at the gross and bitter assertions by which it supported itself, yet I thought it must be so, and that I ought to overcome the weakness or superstition which made me feel thus.

But I would not trouble myself much on this evening. I would let go all questions of difference, and think of my great happiness. The earth and the sky were beautiful; the fields

seemed larger and more smiling, the golden harvest which waved upon them more luxuriant, the creek more tranquil, the very cows walking before me, more quiet and contented than at other times. Every one of the diversified objects about me seemed more palpably clothed upon with its characteristic beauty. My spirit was clearer sighted, to see what, in its duller or disturbed states, it more dimly perceived. I had more to to think upon now than ever before.

When I retired to my room, I repaired to my trunk, to take thence Mr. Ramsay's book, in which I had not yet read a page. I quite wondered at myself, when I saw it—it looked so tempting a thing to my eyes; but I sat down on the floor, letting the hand that held it rest inside the trunk, and began to think whether I should try to read, or give myself up to the idle luxury of thinking over what had passed; and while I was attempting to decide, I wandered so far away, to the sunshine and shadow on the water; the Madonna; the good living mother, whom Henry had spoken of, in such words that I could scarcely think of her as less sweet or tender than the pictured one; the distant school, and the life beyond it—that I did not return till I was startled by the quick dropping of my candle in its socket.

I undressed hastily, by its last flicker, and laid down. Tom was on the bed-cover, as usual. I had not observed him for several nights, and now I said, "Poor old Tom!" and passed my hand over his head and back. He walked up to my pillow, purring, drew the side of his head against my cheek, and mewed in his low, affectionate way, and then laid down above my shoulder, as close to my neck and face as he could get. I was quite moved; for I remembered the time when nobody loved or noticed me but Tom, and now his demonstrativeness seemed to accuse me of the neglect with which I had treated him, since I had been interested in persons and other things. I apologized, imperfectly in words, but most heartily in spirit and act; for I at once gave up all my grand thoughts, all my delightful remembrances, and devoted myself to my humble, but faithful, old

comforter, stroking his back, and patting him, and speaking to him in low tones, till we both fell asleep.

I had very placid times for the next two or three weeks. I remember them well, because of what followed. Uncle was very kind. He was, indeed, always so; but generally it was made a negative sort of kindness, by his dread of raising a storm if he noticed me. Now he seemed to feel more at liberty; and occasionally he talked with me in the house, in her presence, as before he used only to talk in the fields or in her absence. And he won my gratitude, that was ready to overflow for the least real kindness, by giving me, one day, a pair of shoes—fine morocco shoes, much more elegant than those Mr. Peterson made for me, and I had never before had any others. He seemed a little doubtful himself, if this was not a dangerous liberty to have taken; for he did not show them to me till two days after he had been to the town where he bought them, and just as we were making ready to go out to spend the day at some distance from home, when they were pretty certain to pass without severe condemnation.

During the ride, going and coming, aunt spoke many times to me, in a pleasant way; and uncle was so far encouraged, that he even tried one of Mr. Ramsay's jokes upon me, which I resolutely laughed at, though it was stale, and had annoyed me before. I wondered at what was passing, and still more at what had produced it, and whether it could have been Henry's taking my part, on that day never to be forgotten. But I was too well content with what was, to let my inquiries trouble me.

We called at Mrs. Peterson's, on our way home, and I remember feeling so much pity for Tom, as he sat hanging his head outside the door, that I could have shaken hands warmly with him, but that I had such a sense of his being *bad*, and a consequent dread of him. I had long ago forgiven him. It was my great weakness, indeed, that I could not long retain a just indignation. The clemency of my nature, united with my strong interest in ideas, and things that I thought and read of, made

me forgetful of injuries, and totally oblivious, after a sort time, of the burning sense of wrong in which I first suffered them. Mrs. Peterson, who always noticed me, but in that spontaneous, motherly way, that did not admit of ill-natured criticism, asked me why I had not been to see her for such a long while.

I replied that I had been learning a good deal lately, and had no time to go about the neighborhood.

"Are you going to school, then?" she asked.

"No, not going to school; but I read whenever I can get a chance; and one of the gentlemen who are encamped at our house, is kind enough to teach me about many things, when I can go to him; and so, I am getting to know a great deal more than I used to."

"Do you know where the cloth is all made, now?" she asked, laughing. "I believe that was the last of your big questions to me."

"Yes," I replied; "Mr. Fleming has told me all about that, and the weavers, too; and it's a dreadful story that I'll tell you some day, when I can come here. They're not as happy as you are. There comes aunt—don't tell her about Mr. Fleming."

"Don't fear me, child; you'll never get a scolding or beating for what I say."

Aunt had been across the road to speak to a sister-in-law, who lived opposite. They stood at her gate to chat, for, notwithstanding that uncle was the most placable of men, and seemed one of that sort to whom continued anger, or an unforgiving state of mind would be impossible, there was a feud of years standing, between himself and his brother. They never spoke to each other, and none of us ever went to their house. The brother's wife visited at our house, but, though she was cordially welcomed and respected there, no invitations to return her visits were ever given or looked for. She was a meek woman—very good, I think—whose life seemed to me one long martyrdom. She had been bred in a social position far superior to that she now held; and almost always in the course of her afternoons

with us, she spoke, with glistening eyes, of her feeling so very much the separation from her mother and sisters, and other friends, and of her having so little acceptable society around her. She lost her children, too, so that, of a family of six, she had but two living at this time ; but none of these afflictions ever took aunt to her house, though she made as much profession of regard to the suffering mother as to any woman who ever visited her.

I had wondered very much at this, for I always had a feeling that, however angry I might be with a person, I should forget it at once, and go to them, if I knew they were suffering and I could comfort or help them. On reaching home, I found that uncle, who had been talking with Mr. Peterson in the same room, had heard my reply to his wife about the weavers, for when we were by ourselves, he said, "Eliza, how came Mr. Fleming to tell you what you told Priscilla ? did you ask him ?"

"Yes, sir," I replied, a little timidly, for I didn't know how he would like my having done so. "But don't tell aunt—she might be angry with me for it."

"I shall not tell her," he said ; "but you might have asked me, and I could have told you as well."

"Did you know about them ?" I inquired.

"Certainly, child. Haven't I been in England a great many times ? and when I lived in —— did I not have English weavers in the factory ? I could have told you all about them, and I wish, Eliza, that you would ask me, sometimes, things that you want to know. It will be better than always going to strangers."

"I will, uncle," I said, "if you will let me, and aunt will not always say something that I don't like to hear, when I speak to you. But nobody told me that you knew this, and Mr. Radford and Mr. Garland both told me Mr. Fleming would tell me all."

"And so you are learning from everybody but us, are you ?" he said, sorrowfully.

I felt a reproach in his words which was painful to me, for

I had that kind of affection for him that grows in a child's heart out of habit, and daily relations that are peaceful and kindly, and I was thoroughly convinced of his personal good intentions towards me. He drew me to him as he said this, and seated me upon his knee.

I was afraid I should cry, and I wished not to, lest it should banish the sunshine that he, as well as I, was so much freer and happier in. So I swallowed hard two or three times, with a firm determination that the tears which I felt starting should not be seen; and when I got command of myself, I said: "I should not go to other people, uncle, but sometimes I think you would not like to have me talk much to you: and I wish so very much to know about things that I think of, and to learn about a great deal that I never think of till somebody tells it me, that you can't think, uncle, how happy I am when I can get a book that I like, or some gentleman who will talk to me about what is in books."

"It's a very cheap happiness, my dear," he said, "and one that you should have enough of if"——

"Eliza!" exclaimed aunt, at this moment, from the cheese-pantry, where she was engaged, "come here."

I darted in.

"Why hasn't thee changed thy clothes and shoes, to go and milk?"

"I will now," I replied; "but the cows are not in the yard yet, and I was speaking to uncle."

By the time I was ready, I heard the low of Star, my pet cow, who had this fashion of calling me, when it happened that I did not go to the pasture to drive them. I took my pails, for I had to carry two, and went forth. To my surprise and alarm, when I stepped down the stile, Tom Peterson was standing a little distance from it, apparently waiting for some one. I walked in the opposite direction, and Star, who insisted on being always milked first, walked briskly—almost indignantly—after me, with her head raised and her eyes opened wide, as if she would say: "What does such conduct as this mean, miss?"

When I had reached a safe distance, and sat down to milk her, I glanced furtively at the face of the boy, and I was less frightened. It had not the old look at all. I could not describe the difference, but I knew at once that that was not the old Tom Peterson whom I was never to speak to, and who had promised never to speak to me. I wondered how it was, for I had never thought of his becoming better than he was. He did not move till Jim, the boy who was in Albert's place, came into the yard, and then he stepped up to him and spoke. They turned and looked at me, and Jim seemed to assent to something Tom said, for they both walked towards me ; and I wondered all the way what it could mean. They came up, and James stood still while Tom said, "Eliza, I promised never to speak to you when you was alone, and I brought Jim along to hear me." He had pulled off his old ragged hat while he was speaking, and now stood, awkwardly, twirling and picking it, wishing to say more, but unable to get forward.

This proceeding perfectly removed my fear, and I said, as I would have spoken to any one who had never wronged me, "Well, Tom, what do you wish to say to me ?"

"Why," said he, "if you're not afraid to let Jim go away, I could tell you better."

"O no," I replied, "I'm not at all afraid ; you don't look as you used to when I was afraid of you. James, you may go to your cows." I waited for Tom to speak, and milked as silently as I could, that he might speak low if he chose—that he should in any case feel that I was attending.

"Why, the fact is, you see, Eliza," he began, squatting down at a little distance from me, "that I—I want to tell you that—I am—very sorry for what I did last summer, and to ask you to forgive me."

"You said that before, Tom."

"Yes, but I didn't mean it a bit then. I said it 'cause Radford made me, not 'cause I wanted to myself. But mam has talked a good deal, since, to me, and"——

"Don't call her so," I said ; I never could endure the name ; "call her mother, Tom."

"Well, mother, then ; she's talked a good deal to me, and when you came to our house this afternoon, and looked at me as you came into the gate, I made up my mind to come and speak to you, and ask you to let me help you milk to-night—will you ?"

"Why, Tom," I replied, a little at a loss what to say to his last request, "I don't feel angry at all for what you did long ago ; and I'm not a bit afraid of you, any more than of Albert or James, if you mean to be good ; but I don't know if you ought to help me milk; I think not." I had a lingering doubt that he might feel freed from the restraint that I was yet fearful of removing altogether. "I can milk my cows very well, and I think I ought not to say that you may help me ; not," I said, noticing his disappointed look, "because I haven't entirely forgiven you, but because I am a little afraid that you may not always be as good as you seem to be now."

"I'll try, if you'll let me—upon my word, I will, Eliza !" he said ; "and I'll promise not to speak to you any more than I have, if you'd rather I wouldn't."

I could not resist this, and I said, "Well, you may milk half my cows, if you wish to so much; and if you are always as good as you are now, you can speak to me just as anybody else does, that I have never been afraid of."

"Thank you," said Tom ; and he took up my empty pail, and moved off with alacrity to the hardest milking cow among my number. He knew them all as well as I did ; and when the milking was over, he carried the full pails to the door of the house for me, and set off for home without saying a word, except to return "Welcome," to my "Thank you." Thus, everything seemed to conspire in these days to make me happy. I reflected on this circumstance with a gladness of spirit which I could not have expressed. I had in my own secret heart an exalted standard by which to measure all actions of others, and an exalted approval to seek for my own. Most of the people about me

were minor circumstances in my present life. There was for me one soul, one mind, one heart, that filled the little sphere of my existence. Unconsciously I referred all to him, and nothing that I could conceive or do, I thought, could be noble and right enough for the measure he would apply to it. I was not troubled by the desire to communicate all to him. It sufficed that my inner consciousness said, "It will please him."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"With what free growth the elm and plane
Fling their huge arms across our way,
Grey, old, and cumbered with a train
Of vines as huge, and old, and grey!"

My only misgivings were on the religious difference, and I do not know how that troubled me so little, except that in reference to it, my mind partook of the hardness of the theory it entertained, and of those natures from whom I had unconsciously imbibed it. I certainly did wish that I had never heard what had shocked him so much, for then I should never have believed it; but I was at a loss to know whether I ought to tell him just what I felt or not. I considered it much, and I would have liked to ask anybody to whom I could speak on such a subject; but there was nobody, and I had to wait to have it decided by circumstances. Henry told me that he was going to ask permission, the last Sunday they remained in that camp, to take me to walk, and I was to show him the way down to the large raft, a long section of drift-wood, that bridged the creek perfectly across, something less than two miles below our house. I had been there with Mr. Radford, and it was a delightful walk; much of the way through a dense wood, after leaving the lower meadow. He was very pleasant with aunt in these

days, treating her always with a deference which gratified her highly, and made her very willing to oblige him. So, when he came in after breakfast was over, and had chatted with her a few minutes, and spoken to me, which he always did, as with a purpose to notice me, he asked if she would permit me to be his *cicerone* in a walk to the long raft? I did not understand that word, and it puzzled me so very much, that I only waited for her answer to ask him what it meant.

She looked thoughtful a moment, and then said, "Yes, she can go, for I suppose she wishes it more than thee does, and if my husband comes in, I should like to go along myself."

This quite chilled me, for I should never dare to talk to Henry in her presence, and so it would be little pleasure to me to go. But he said, "If he does not come, will you not go with us? I will do my best as your escort, and I suppose the road is not a difficult one."

"No," she replied; "but it's rather long, and thee would tire of having an old woman like me, to help along. I am not a good walker, and I don't often try to go out, except to the neighbors, without my husband."

I was already sufficiently educated in the *politeness* which I had seen him and his companions practise, to *appear* perfectly indifferent to this, though I was secretly hoping, with an earnestness I could scarcely suppress, that she would not go.

She told me to get ready, and she would finish what I was doing, and when Uncle John came, if he could go, they would come after us.

But I felt so very grateful for this unusual kindness, that I now almost wished her to go; and felt that I could enjoy having them along, enough to give up the talk I was looking forward to having, and the questions I wished to ask—the more, too, that uncle had been so kind when last speaking to me about this, and I said, "Shall I go out and see if I can find him?"

"No," was the reply. "I don't think, on the whole, I ought to go, at any rate. It's a long walk, and I should come back

very tired; but thee's young, and never tires ; so get ready and go."

When we had reached the meadow, I showed Henry my favorite nut-trees ; the plum thicket, and the chestnut that always stood out so boldly against the clear evening sky, when I looked towards it from the dairy-yard, or house. He agreed in admiring it with me, and we chatted along a little further, till I was irresistibly moved to inquire if he really would have liked that aunt should come with us.

"I should not, perhaps, have been so well pleased as to be without her; but if she had come, I should have tried to make the walk pleasant to her."

"Why did you ask her ?"

"Because it would have been rude and discourteous not to have done so, after she expressed a wish to come ; and still ruder, after she had come, not to have treated her with kindness and attention."

I said, "She is very good, lately."

"Is she ?" he asked ; "I am happy indeed, to hear you say so, and I hope she will never be as harsh again as she has been. She should be excused some sourness and ill temper, Eliza, for I see from what she has told me, that she must have had a hard life ; and she has had no friends near her, who loved her; that might have softened her very much."

"So it might," I said, promptly, feeling how much happier it might have made her; but in the next moment, I thought, and said, "but uncle loves her—I know he does," I said again, feeling that he was going to doubt it, "for he told me so once, when I told him she was unkind and I didn't love her at all."

"That is quite true, I dare say," replied Henry ; "but she needed many to help her, brothers, sisters, friends, and children. People who are much loved by many persons, Eliza, are not so apt, I think, to be unkind or wicked, as those who feel themselves alone."

"But," I said, "if they are good and kind, many people will love them; Mr. Garland told me so one day, when I came with him and his children down to this raft, from their house; and he said it made very little difference whether one was handsome or not. If you were very good, everybody would love you the same. Do you think so, Henry?"

He did not reply at once, and I said, "The reason why I ask, is, because I am so very homely, and I begin to think I shall never be handsome. Do you think I could be, if I tried?"

"No, child," he said with a faint smile, "never. God has denied you beauty, Eliza, but he is always just; and he has given you something of more value than that—a good heart, and a mind that will make you useful and beloved. I scarcely know what to say to you, child, in regard to the future, because what you tell me about your aunt's irreligion seems to me to unsettle everything. It is so hard," he added, as if thinking aloud, rather than addressing me, "to make defence against the evil influences of a coarsely irreligious woman. Any error—almost any weakness, if joined to some tenderness, and religious sentiment, would be better than that."

We walked on in a silence which I did not break, till the cool shade of the deep wood had long shut us in. Then the glancing birds—the fresh, sparkling wood-flowers, and the clean sprays of the little shrubs which hedged our path, nodding with the slight breeze that sighed through the shadowy spaces of the forest, quite removed the restraint that had kept me silent. I was ready to burst wildly away with the joyous emotions which in my solitary walks, and also in the few that had been taken with companions, I had always been free to indulge. It was toward the last of August and the fruit of the mandrake or May-apple vine was beginning to ripen. I was very fond of it, and it was even more delightful to hunt and pluck, than taste it. Each vine or plant bore from two to five apples, varying in size from a large walnut to a common apple, and they all hung concealed beneath the leaves, where one was very pleasantly sur-

prised to find them, on bending the stalk back. I plucked some of the fruit, in exactly that state of ripeness which I found most palatable, and offered it to Henry, who stood in the path, waiting for me.

"They are very nice," I said; "but the greatest pleasure is in gathering them. Don't you think the woods are glorious? I should like to have a house right among the trees; wouldn't you?"

"Yes, for a day or two, or a week, or perhaps, one summer."

"Why not longer?"

"Because by the end of the summer, I should wish to get back among people in the world again. There is nobody here to talk with, or to make books or pictures, or to help me do anything that is worthy a man's life to do. Men must do something else, Eliza, besides live in woods and rest in the shade of trees. You will see how that is when you have lived a few years longer. The trees must be cut down, so that the sun can shine on this rich earth, and make grain and grass grow, to feed men and animals. Do you see?"

"Yes," I said, "I see that it ought to be so; but I should not like to cut down, and burn these grand old trees. They are so very old. Do you know that Mr. Radford says some of them have been two or three hundred years growing. Only think how long ago they were small, like this little one, and what a great many suns, and storms, and winds, have passed over them! The trees are awful to me when I think of that—they seem to know more than I do. I wouldn't cut one down for all the world. I should be afraid it would speak to me."

"You believe in the Dryads," said Henry, laughing; and he explained, in answer to my inquiring look, that a great many hundred years ago, the spirit of a woman dwelt in each tree, and that the people who lived then, occasionally took milk, and fruit, and flowers, and other nice things out to offer them, at the root of the tree.

"But, did they take the things?" I asked.

"Nobody ever told me," he replied; "but I think if a pan of milk and a loaf of bread, or a plate of fruit were set here, for instance, among these huge roots, to-day, there would not be much left of them to-morrow; do you think there would?"

"No; but you wouldn't know if the woman came out of the tree and took them, unless you watched, because there are so many creatures here that would eat such things."

Thus we chatted idly along, through the wood, plucking now and then a flower, or a May-apple, or some little plant, whose tender beauty invited me. I avoided being silent, for I dreaded that Henry would return to the religious question, which now began to be very troublesome to me, because the more I thought of it, the more clearly I saw that I ought to let him know how much I was inclined already to think as she did. And this, I knew, would pain him very much.

We reached a little stream, emptying into the large creek, which we were now very near to. There had been a small tree lying across it when I was last there, on which one could cross, but it was gone. The current had spread out also, I thought, for I had threatened Mr. Radford then to run and leap over it, which now I could not have thought of doing, it was so broad. I was very much puzzled, for I could not think of taking off my shoes and stockings, and wading it, as I should have preferred to do if I had been alone, and Henry, looking above and below, could find nothing to help us over. I began to have a nervous dread that something unpleasant would have to be done. I knew that Mr. Ramsay or Mr. Radford would have picked me up, and set me on the other side, without a word, and I began to feel that this might be proposed, so I said: "I think, Henry, there are some rails just above those two large trees. If we had one, we could walk over on it."

"Yes," he said, and set off to bring it. The moment he turned his face away, I denuded my feet, and, before he was out of sight, I was over. Then I wished to save him the trouble of

bridging the stream, for he could easily leap it, and so, as I had dragged my stockings on, and one shoe, I called out, laughingly: "Oh, Mr. Henry, you needn't go for one, I'm over."

He walked back, and seeing me standing as he had left me, said: "Why, Eliza, how could you go over so, and fill your shoes with water?"

"I didn't wet them at all," I answered. "I brought them in my hands, and my stockings too."

"But you have done it so quick," he said, looking incredulously at my feet, as he drew near.

"Because I was afraid you would come back."

"That was quite right," he said; but he did not speak another word about it, for which I was very grateful.

"How far is it to the raft, Eliza?"

"Only a very little way; it's just below the next bend, and the path goes across here in the narrowest part. I like this creek very much," I said, "especially in the woods, but I should be so glad if there was one fall on it. I do so want to see a great waterfall. Did you ever see one?"

"No large one," he replied. "I have seen some small ones in the mountains of Virginia and Maryland."

I told him how very much I was grieved, on our way to this home, when uncle and aunt went to Trenton Falls, that I could not go with them, and how aunt said so little a girl couldn't see the Falls—she couldn't look up high enough. But he told me they were not high, like the Falls of Niagara, but low, and several in number, each differing from the other, and all very beautiful. He had seen engravings of them.

"Here's the raft!" I exclaimed, as we emerged from the tall wood into a small, open space, that bordered the creek just here. "That dead branch you see, that reaches almost into the tops of the trees, was at the upper end two years ago, but the freshets have brought down a great many trees since, and now it reaches a long way this side of it." We walked on, and, leaving the bank, passed out upon the water, stepping on the large old

trunks, that had whitened in the storms and sunshines of successive years. They were wedged so tightly together, that between many of them the little crevices had been filled with soil, on which blades of grass, and sometimes plants of larger growth, had sprung. They had sometimes been driven upon each other, so as to lie three, or even four, deep ; and in some places, where the swollen and turbid current had swept over them for years, its own violence in flood times, and the attrition of the earth's particles—the gravel, sticks, and grasses in the fall, and the ice-cakes in the spring—had polished them, so that I could almost see my face in them.

The raft was a grand mystery to me. It told me of power, which my blood always chilled in thinking of. In the times of freshet, when the otherwise quiet, sluggish-looking stream, raged madly all over the meadows, bearing along great trees, fragments of branches, rails, belated crops of corn, and yellow pumpkins, that played fantastic tricks at every eddy, and whirl, in the muddy, angry-looking current, I used to watch it by day, and listen to its roar by night, and think of the great crash and madness of all these rushing things, when they should find themselves stopped by this old, solid, immovable raft ; and then, it seemed to me, almost endowed with intelligence, as it lay waiting for them to come on, and pile themselves up against it.

I showed Henry my well, as I called it. It was an open, triangular space, midway in the stream, where, standing on the large trunks that surrounded it, we could look down into the dark water, and hear the peculiar hollow sound made by its light current bearing against the lower surface of the timber. It was a frightful place ; more interesting to look into, because I felt that one misstep on the smooth round logs that bore me, would plunge me into the unknown world. Neither Mr. Radford nor Mr. Garland, would let me stand alone on its brink ; but I was old enough now, and I did not offer to touch Henry's hand, till I felt a little affected by the long gaze, and the silence, that permitted

my thoughts to be drawn in, as with the current, and away along the dark passage, to the world of light and sunshine, near a quarter of a mile below.

When I put my hand in his, at last, he said: "You ought never to come here alone, Eliza. These logs are very smooth, and if your foot should slip on them, you would never be heard of again."

"I know it," I replied, "I never do come alone. But if I had fallen in there, just now, what would you have done?"

"I should have plunged in, and brought you out."

"How could you?"

"Oh, I am a duck in the water; I can swim in any position, and below the surface, for a while, if I wish to, as well as above it. I can do anything in the water. I used to swim in the Potomac, and stay down so long, that the boys all called me the diver."

"Wouldn't you be afraid to go under there now?" I asked.

"No, not at all; but I should want something to help myself out by, when I got ready to come."

"Could you go along under the raft!"

"Yes, without difficulty; perhaps I'd go up or down, and come out at one end of it. I never boast, but of my swimming, and I am always a little proud of that."

"But, for all you say, I should be terribly frightened, to see you go down there. A poor little boy went under it, two or three years ago, and he has never been found. Oh, it must be an awful place—so dark and breathless. Let us come over to the bank, and sit down."

CHAPTER XIX.

"I believe it! 'tis thou, God, that givest; tis I, who receive.
In the first is the last; in Thy will is my power to believe."

We seated ourselves upon moss cushions, between the roots of a large tree, that bent over the water, and presently Henry said: "Eliza, this will be the last Sunday here, perhaps the last on which we shall ever see each other, and, before we go back, I wish to have a little serious talk with you, about yourself. We have chatted long enough, I think, about nothing."

"You never seem to me to talk about nothing," I replied, saddened at once by the mention of the near approach of his departure. "I remember everything you say to me."

"I am glad you do," he said, "for what I am going to say now, I particularly wish you should never forget.

"Your position in Mr. Smalley's house, and family, Eliza, is very unfortunate, in many things, but not in all; and you may, perhaps, study a little more to content yourself, if you sometimes think of what might be worse with you. In the first place, you have plenty of food—good food—that keeps you healthy, and that is better than if it were poor and scanty; is it not?"

"Yes," I replied; "but I care nothing for that, Henry." I was not inclined to make much of this circumstance.

"In the next place, you are comfortably clothed, though your garments are not handsome, and are sometimes torn. Then, it is very good, that your uncle is always kind to you—much better than if he, too, were cross and unkind, as his wife is. And all the good friends you have here should be remembered; the Radfords, the Garlands, Mr. Fleming, and others. They have done you a great deal of good; have they not?"

"Yes, but"—— I was confused by this statement of the goods of my poor, little, darkened life, but he heeded it not, and went on:

"You have been able to read some very good books, and Albert, who has helped you to them, seems to have been as good as a brother to you. I like that very much—very much, indeed, Eliza. You ought to remember it thankfully."

"I do," I said, scarcely able to speak.

"You have papers, also, and though what you learn from them is not, perhaps, just that which would be best for a little girl, yet it is better to know that than nothing. Do you not think so?"

I bowed my head in assent.

"You live in a country, too, which, though it is not the most beautiful, contains a great deal to interest your mind. I see that the creek, and the freshets, you have just told me about; and the lake, which you hear and dream of, though you never see it; and the great forests, with their innumerable tenants, have all instructed you. You have learned a great deal. Is it quite right to think, altogether, ill of the life that has given you such opportunities?"

What could I say but No? So I shook my head in silence; for my heart was bursting with the case that my best beloved friend seemed to be making out against me.

"You have been fearful, you tell me, that you were what you have been so often called, a simpleton—a fool. Now, let me tell you about that, Eliza. I have thought of it a good deal, since our last talk down by the creek, and I have concluded it was best to tell you just what I think. It may, perhaps, strengthen you, if, at any time, you need to be helped in a difficulty, by remembering that I thought you could overcome it. I think that, in two or three years, you can do almost anything for yourself, that girls in general can when they are sixteen or eighteen. You have so much courage and resolution, that you will be able to get your rights. I mean by that, that if you try to do what

it is right for your aunt to require of you, and tell her, or let her understand, that you do not wish to do otherwise, nor to submit to abuse, she will be checked or"—— He paused. "Or, if she should not, you will get away from her. I am quite sure that you will do that, at any rate, if she doesn't send you to school. I think I had not nearly so strong a desire to learn at your age as you have; and yet I feel very certain that, if I had been kept from school, as I grew older, I should have run away, even from my own father and mother, to go. But there is no hurry, Eliza. You are very young yet; and when you get to studying, you will learn so rapidly that, if your health is good, what other scholars are three or four years in doing, you will do in one or two. But while you are here, read all you can. Everything that you can learn will help you a little; and never mind if people do laugh at you sometimes—you are getting what will be valuable to you, and what you have a right to. And you must remember, Eliza, so as not to feel too much hurt, that you cannot expect the same treatment from many other persons that you receive from me. I talk to you as if you were near my own age, because, in some respects, you seem to be. Few people will do that, my dear, because few will take the pains to know you as I know you. But you need not be troubled at this. There is nothing wrong in any one's treating you, as Mr. Ramsay does, like a very little child. It is not so kind and considerate as it might be, certainly, but most people will do it, for a year or two yet. I speak more of this, because I know that your thoughts and feelings about it make you unhappy often, when you might be otherwise. This ought not to be now. Remember that the people who thus trifle, or play boisterously with you, think you as much a child in mind as you are in size and years; and the indignation which shows that you are not, only amuses them, and makes them return to it with greater relish than before you showed it."

I knew this was true in the case of Mr. Ramsay, and some other persons; and it did me a great deal of good to feel that,

in submitting to such familiarities, I should not be tamely giving up to such great outrage as it had seemed to me before.

"But when you are a little older, Eliza, you cannot be too careful how you suffer persons to approach or speak to you, especially the common men, and boys whom you are likely to have about you here. I like that pretty Mrs. Radford's looks; and I think she and her husband, who has already shown you so much kindness, will be good friends to you. You can always speak to them of anything unpleasant that happens to you, or that you fear; and I think they will tell you what is right. Do you think you understand, my dear Eliza, what I have said to you?"

"Yes."

"And will remember it?"

"Yes."

"Well, no tears now; for I am not yet done, and wish your earnest attention a little while longer."

"I believe," I said, almost choking with my suppressed emotions, "I am afraid you think that I ought to be very happy here, and not complain of anything. Do you think so?"

"I wish I could, Eliza. Heaven knows I should go away with a much lighter heart, if I were leaving you in a pleasant home, with a kind and loving woman, who would give you books and time to study them, and who would teach you the many things that a little girl ought to be taught by a good woman. I fear you have misunderstood me, Eliza. I recalled to you what was good, and even tolerable, in your life, that you might be comforted in some time of trouble by remembering it. Nobody is ever happier for thinking only what they have to suffer. But now, Eliza, I have a few more words to say, and then we will talk of something to make you happier. I know this does not cheer you now, but it will, I hope, by and by, on some of the dark days, before the water gets out into full sunshine.

"The worst thing in your life here, is what you have told me of your adopted mother's religion, or rather, irreligion. Eliza,

I cannot believe that there is a person living who has not some sort of religious belief or hope, though they may deny it in talk. I have great difficulty in saying what I wish to impress on you about this, because you are not old enough to understand me; but, as well as I can tell you what I mean, it is this: That people do sometimes try very hard to believe that religion is weakness, or foolishness, or superstition, or something as much to be ashamed of as either of these. And perhaps they succeed, by talking a great deal, in making themselves think they do believe this, and that they have none of it about them. This woman, I should think, may have done so. She is so hard, and violent, that I can almost believe it of her, bad as it seems. But, Eliza, I wish you to try not to hear the talk she has about these things. It cannot do you any good; it will not teach you anything that is true; it will not make you love truth, or think of God, who is always a good Father to you (not like the one you have in New York), or love persons; it will not help you, in any way, to be better or wiser than you are. Listen to me now," he said, with increased earnestness, laying his hand on my shoulder. "You think of God sometimes, do you not?"

"Yes; very often, Henry."

"How do you think of him?"

"I do not know. I cannot tell."

"No, I suppose not. You could not well have any definite idea of Him when you hear so much that is contradictory, and unreasonable, and false. But suppose now, that God made this world, and everything it contains, and placed you in it, what do you think He would wish you to do?"

"To be very good," I answered.

"Yes, to be very good, certainly; but what else?"

My theology embraced but one cardinal point, and I had stated that. I puzzled myself long, in vain, to think what else could be required of me, and at length said, reluctantly, "I don't know, Henry, what else. I cannot think."

"Well, listen, and let me see if I can help you. You believe,

now, Eliza, that I love you, and wish very much that you should be a happy and good child, and grow to be a good woman, do you not ?"

This approach to our personal relation was very dangerous to my firmness ; but I made a great resolution to control myself, and replied that I did.

"Well, I shall be gone, in a few days, away from you, and it is not probable that I shall ever see you again, or not more than once or twice, if at all. Will you not think of me, after I am gone, and of what I wish in regard to you ?"

"Yes, a great deal," I whispered.

"Well, what do you think I shall wish most of all ?"

"That I should be good."

"Yes ; and what besides ?"

"That I should love you, and do what would please you ?" I asked, venturing upon the expression of what was strongest in my own mind.

"Yes, I should wish that, certainly ; but, more than that, I should wish you to believe that I was still near to you, by my love for you ; that I am not dead and gone, to you, because my body is far away. Do you understand me ?"

"I think I do," I said, dimly perceiving the idea of the spirit-life, independent of the body. (I had had a clearer flash of the same light, though from an opposite quarter, on the memorable day of his conversation with aunt, when I felt that he could no longer be himself to me, unless he spoke again for me after she had answered him rudely.) I reflected some time, and then said, "I think I understand you, Henry. You mean that there is something in you, besides your body that I see, and your tongue that talks to me, and that it will be the same to me when they are gone away. Is that it ?"

"That is just it, my dear child ; and it would grieve and distress me more than anything else, to have you think, when what you see of me, this form, walks or rides away beyond your sight, that I, who love you, am gone with it. And if I, who am

only a man, am not dead to you, or gone from you, because I am no longer in your sight, how much more must God, who made and loves you better than any man or woman can, live to and be near you!"

The illustration was wisely chosen, and much more simply and forcibly expressed from his lips than my pen. It was wise, because it forever convinced me of the great truth of spirit-existence; but I could not clearly reach further than his individuality with it. *He* had been proved to my senses. I had seen, and heard, and touched *him;* and I felt that, however it was, he would never, never die to me. But I did not so know God. My mind was educated to no conception of him. I constantly heard the grossest and most conflicting statements of his attributes and character; and whenever I had attempted to form some idea of him, it was, in consequence of these things, so fragmentary, and incongruous, and shifting, that I soon dismissed it and all thought of it. Then, the hard, exacting, rectangular arguments of the infidel school, fell on my grasping reasoning powers, that were yet too feeble to try them, and prove their intrinsic value and force, and I found a certain satisfaction in receiving them. I said to myself, "Yes, if there were a good God, who could do everything, He would certainly not let good people suffer as they do, nor bad ones always have their way, as aunt and Mr. Rumsey do."

I thought over these same thoughts, sitting there by the side of my dear friend, but all was cloudy and broken in reference to God. I could not make the illustration, which had convinced me that he was not the form I saw sitting there, reach to the Creator, and I felt sad and oppressed at this, as well as by the impending grief of a separation which grew more terrible to me with every hour of this living communion with him. There was a long silence. At length I said, "Henry, you don't expect me to answer any more about that, do you?"

"About the existence and love of God?"

I nodded.

"No," he replied; "I do not wish you to tax your mind in trying to do what is impossible, with the unhappy education you have received. I wished to impress upon you, that there is a God who is only a spirit, such as I shall be to you, after I am gone away out of your sight and hearing; and that you are never to believe that there is not, because you cannot see or hear Him, any more than you are to believe that I am not, or never was, for the same reason. And now, if I have done that, I will only say beside, that if you have a Bible I wish you sometimes to read in the New Testament, especially in the books called Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. You can understand nearly everything in them, and they will tell you about Christ and his mother. And sometimes, Eliza, when you feel like doing something especially to please me, read the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of Matthew. They will teach you all that is most beautiful and sweet to know and to do. Do not think as that hard woman does if you can help it. I am certain you will never feel as she does, and I trust in God and your own true nature, to correct any errors you may fall into, before you are old enough to see the truth through all the mist and fog that envelop you at present. May God bless you. I have done, Eliza. It is your turn now."

The God bless you, sounded so much like last words, that I utterly broke down when they came. I buried my face in my hands, and wept with a violence that shook me, as the midnight tempest shakes the light craft which glides safely over the smooth, morning sea. My sorrow was too old for my life. It was the anguish of the woman, sweeping over and bowing down the young child. It was as if the storms and tempests, which the tall cedar of Lebanon has grown up into and strengthened itself in braving, should be let loose in their utmost rage upon the slender shrubs that only bend and nestle closer at its foot while they pass.

My unnatural life had forced the faculties, which could not be imprisoned by it, out of the sphere where my physical being yet

belonged, and the terrible discord threatened to destroy me. I did not feel such an ebb of the life power as I had on *that day*, but a keener torture wrung my whole frame. I looked forward to the desolation of the future, for never, never, my heart foretold me, should I find another such friend, and all the comforting words he had uttered were as wind—as the rustling of the leaves above us. What was it to me to be well fed and protected from cold—to have health—to experience common-place kindness after this—to be able to get books, or even to have liberty to read them? They all would not replace this living soul. Thus I wept, and did not attempt to speak.

CHAPTER XX.

"So wondrous wild, the whole might seem
The scenery of a fairy dream."

At length Henry spoke, and laying his hand very gently on my arm, said, "come Eliza, I have indulged you long enough in this, child. You are my sister, you know, and you must try to do what I ask of you. You ought not to weep in this passionate way, any longer. Come, rest your head against me; so; now let us see if these rebellious tears will not stay back. There, wipe them away, and they must not come any more."

His words had a wonderful power over me. They were not mere words; but whatever they expressed became a necessity, or law to my interior life. My tears were stayed, not by any effort of my own will, but spontaneously, because he wished it. He smiled, and I answered it because it seemed that I must.

"That is right, little one; now let us see what you are going to do this fall and winter. You have Mr. Ramsay's book to read, and I think, when all our folks meet down at the Lake, I

shall be able to find a few more that you will like. I will hunt all the reading fellows up, and few of them will care to take books back with them I know; so that I am quite certain I shall be able to get some for you. If I bring them and give them to your uncle, would you get them?"

"They had better be given to Mr. and Mrs. Radford," I said. "Then I shall certainly have them. Uncle would give them to me, but it might make him some trouble."

"Very well; Mr. Radford it shall be, and I think well of it, too, because I should like to go and see him and his nice little wife about you. Then you say Albert is coming back to live with you this winter, is he?"

"Yes."

"Can he not teach you a little in arithmetic?"

"I suppose he could, if we had any chance; he knows enough of it."

"Did you not tell me that you rise in winter a long time before daylight?"

"Yes, Mr. Radford, and Albert and I used to. I always got their breakfast, and they ate by candlelight."

"Did your uncle and aunt rise so early too?"

"No, not till daylight."

"Well, now, could you not get an hour or more in the mornings with Albert, to teach you how to use figures? It would be better than all reading, for that time. You will find that you can learn a great deal so in the course of the winter, and it will help you very much when you come to get to school. What do you think of the plan?"

"I will try," I said, raising myself and sitting erect, "because I should like to very much, and because you have told me; but I am afraid, if she gets bad again after you are all gone, that I can't do much. She has so many ways of worrying us, and keeping us all the time in dread, that we used to be almost afraid of her when she was asleep. But I will try."

"Shall we go home now?"

"If you please. Oh, I wonder when I shall come here again, and who will be with me!"

"Whoever is with you, Eliza, never come alone. It is a very dangerous place for a little child."

I promised that I never would, and as we were setting off, I said, "Oh, Henry, wouldn't you like to go up on the other side of the creek; there's a path all the way, and then we can get some plums? I was down at the thicket the other day, and a great many of them are ripe."

"How can we get back across the creek?"

"On a great log that lies just below the plum-trees."

"Are you sure it is not gone?" he asked.

"Oh, I know it is not. It has stayed there through all the freshets, ever so long. It can't go away, and sometimes other trees have lodged against it, but uncle has them cut, so that they will float off, as soon as the water falls a little, because he doesn't wish to have a raft made there. But the log is a good bridge, so he lets it be."

We passed the "deep hole,"—a dark, fearful-looking place, where the bank went precipitously down many feet to the water, that was blacker there than anywhere else. Mr. Radford had told me a fable of its having no bottom, which I still partly believed, and shuddered at; but Henry laughed, and said he would dive there some day, and when he came back tell me all about it.

At the plum thicket I did the honors with great alacrity. I seated my guest in the coolest and most picturesque of the many little arbors that were shut in by the drooping vines around, and the closely knitted boughs overhead, and brought him fruit from the different trees, and descanted on the merits of each, as a horticulturist discourses on his best grafts, and stocks, and buds. I had no scientific terms to make my meaning lucid; but I had a most intimate knowledge of the place, and its capabilities and doings for three years, for the thicket was my summer palace.

The sun never shone through the thick canopy of leaves and woven boughs. There was

> "No more sky, for overbranching,
> At my head than at my foot."

And where the wild vines shot up from the rank soil, and occasionally stretched from one small trunk to another, they formed close walls of verdure to the little apartments between them; and the slender, broken trunks of the trees seemed not so much a part of the growth as shafts set to support the leafy roof. I was delighted to perceive in Henry's face the unexpected pleasure this fairy spot gave him.

"Do you know, Eliza, what this place reminds me of? It is like the bowers of the banyan-tree that grows in the East Indies."

"Yes," I said; "I thought so when I read a description of that tree last winter. Mr. Garland gave it me in a pamphlet he had, which described many curious things, but that was the most wonderful of them all. How very much I did wish I could see one."

"This must be very like one, I suppose," said Henry, "except the size, and these bending walls of leaves and vines. I could almost fancy myself under one of them and you a little East Indian girl—a small princess, maybe, who would take a fancy to wait on me. Your highness would oblige me," he said, bowing gravely, "by serving a goblet of water."

My imagination had never been trained to that sort of play, and was not ready enough to serve me. I puzzled myself for a single moment to reply, suitably *in character*, and not being able to, said, "I should be very happy to offer you some, but I have nothing to bring it in; if you will come to my spring just under the opposite bank, I'll show you where you can drink, and it's the most delicious water."

"I may as well see all the wonders and beauties of this retreat," he said, rising; and we went back to the other side of

the creek, and a little way up the precipice, by a winding, broken path, till we came to a slight hollow, scooped out of the steep face of the high bank, over which, several feet above us, projected a mass of earth, bound together, and held in its overhanging position by the small roots of innumerable shrubs, which shot out of it in every direction, and by the greater ones of a larger tree. The tree grew upon the verge, and seemed, with every gust of wind that swept over it, from above, in the very act of crashing down upon us, and the green little world below, and the glassy water, which we could just see shining through its leafy crevices.

"That tree will fall some day," said Henry. "I do not see why it doesn't now."

"It has very large roots on the top of the bank," I said, "on its other side. They go ever so far out in the earth, and one of them is larger than all these together."

"Do you know why that should be, Eliza ?"

"No; I often wished to, but I never asked anybody but Mr. Radford, and he said he supposed it happened so."

"Things do not *happen*, Eliza, without a cause. The reason why the roots are larger on the other side, is, that as the earth crumbled and washed away from these, they received most nourishment from the soil that was never disturbed around them, and now they will hold the tree till this bank washes away under the trunk, and when that happens, it will come down headlong, Eliza, where you and I are standing; and then, if we were here, I am afraid we should not get home to tea that night. But it will be likely to fall in some heavy storm of rain and wind, when we shall not be out; so I think we need not frighten ourselves now. But where is this spring ?"

"It is a little above, yet; there where you see that damp spot."

"It must be very small. I am afraid it will hardly hold enough for us both to drink from."

"Oh, yes; it has more than a pailful of water in it; and it is

the clearest and coolest you ever drank. Here it is," I said, taking my stand by a young elder bush that was laden with purple berries.

The spring was on a level with my hands. Its basin had been scooped out by Albert, in some leisure hour, two summers before, and the water dripped into it from a projecting fragment of rock, where it oozed from the bank, three feet or more, above. The dripping was too slow for a stream, but so rapid, that the great, elongated, trembling drops chased each other along the under surface of the conducting fragment, and leaped off so rapidly, that their quick, successive plunges kept a series of the tiniest wavelets moving to the grassy margin of the little basin below. Albert had thrown two or three handfuls of bright gravel-stones into the bottom of the spring, and through the clear water, every shade of color, and every delicate line upon their surfaces was distinctly visible. If I had been proud of the plum thicket, I was more so of this gem of quick and living beauty. I gathered his appreciation of it from one glance at Henry's face before he put his lips to the water. He took a long draught, and I followed him, before either of us said a word. I did not like to ask his praise, but at length I said, "Isn't it beautiful?"

"Why did you never tell me of it, before?" he asked. "I would walk ten miles to see anything so beautiful. It is perfect."

I told him that the spring used to be higher up, but the earth had washed off, and then Albert had made this, and how like a fairy home it seemed to me the first time I had seen it. I had read of fairies in a little book the Edwardses had lent me, and I used to fancy them going to sea in this spring, on a flower leaf, and crossing from one city to another on the different shores of this miniature ocean.

Henry said I should call it "The Spring of the Fairies," and he dipped his hand in the clear water, and sprinkled the turf around it, by way of christening. I always turned reluctantly

away from this spot, and I did so now, particularly, for I had never before stood there with anybody who felt its beauty as I did; but I said, mentally, as we returned, "I shall always love it better now, for his having been here, and named it."

CHAPTER XXI.

"Now, long that instrument has ceased to sound—
Now long that gracious form in earth has lain,
Tended by nature only, and unwound
Are all those mingled threads of Love and Pain;
So let me weep and bend
My head, and wait the end;
Knowing that God creates not thus in vain."

THERE were yet three days before the encampment was to break up. I scarcely knew my own state of mind while they were passing, but when the third came, the removal was put off further—till Saturday. On the morning of that day, made memorable through my whole life, the camp was early astir. The wagons came, and the tents were struck before eight o'clock. I was wandering disconsolately about, in the few occasional moments when I was not employed, looking upon all their movements, and feeling that kind of helpless dismay that so paralyzes the life, when some great sorrow, which cannot be averted—which one feels must be borne—is coming upon the soul. I was very wretched, but I buried my pain deep—deep down in the hidden recesses of my heart. I would have died sooner than it should have been suspected.

The gentlemen walked about, gathering up their boxes of instruments and clothing; the men loaded the wagons with the tents, chests, and various other articles, and by nine o'clock they drove off. My thoughts—my whole being was concentered upon one single moment in that day. All else was mechanical

—my life beside a vague dream of pain and chilly endurance. That was the moment of parting with my friend. For though he had spoken of returning, I felt that whether I ever saw him again or not, this was the time of anguish to me.

They came in to take leave of us. Each one had a kindly or jocose word for me, and one, a man of gentle speech, whose hair was thickly sprinkled with grey, said, as I gave him my hand, "What ails our little girl, to look so pale, and have so cold a hand?"

I was not pale the next moment, for my face blazed, and the whole surface of my body felt suddenly raised to furnace heat. But he saw nothing in it. He thought a child's life must necessarily be vacant, except in the few moments when it might be stirred by external influences or awakened passion. They had all said good bye, but Henry. Last before him was the good-natured Mr. Clarke, whom I had long ago forgiven, for not interesting me as much as I had expected him to, before he came. He shook my hand, and chucking me under the chin, by way of a little extra patronage, said, "Shall I give your love to Mr. Ramsay?"

I fired, at the act, and still more at the words; but I remembered instantly that Henry had said I must not be angry at such things, and I said calmly, "No, you needn't give my love to Mr. Ramsay. Since he was so kind to me when he brought the book, I thank him always when I think of him, but I don't love him at all."

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, "we are getting very exact in our language, I think." But he was in haste, and passed on, laughing, and saying that he should make Ramsay shout by telling him that.

They were all gone, one after the other, on horseback, up the road that led towards the lake. It joined that on which the house fronted, at right angles, a short distance eastward from it. They were all gone but Henry, and I was sweeping the floor, slowly enough to have provoked ill temper at another

time, for my arms seemed to have no power. It was difficult for me to use the broom, even slowly.

I heard a step at the door—a quick, light one. He had been delayed, and hastened to overtake his companions. His leave-taking was brief, but very courteous and respectful to aunt, and while it was taking place, I glided quietly from the room, into the passage. I scarcely knew if I was alive. He stepped out, and with a glistening eye, and flushed face, laid his hand on my head, bent over me, and touched his lips to my forehead; and I heard the words, "Do not weep. If I can get a horse, I will ride up to-morrow, and see you." And he was gone. I was conscious that he walked quickly out to the gate, mounted, and rode rapidly away.

By this time it was ten o'clock. The morning tasks were nearly over. I moved mechanically through all that I had to do, without difficulty—only with effort—my body seemed to be a machine, which kept moving because it was already in motion. The *I*, which I understood, from Henry's explanation, to be my true, suffering self, was wandering, in frozen desolation, through the past and the future, vainly seeking alleviation of its present anguish. But it found no peak of rest. A level waste of wretchedness was before me, and the past did not avail the heart, that was too young to have any sense of identification in it. I did not see myself there. I *must look forward*, by a law of my being and my scanty years; and all the view was only pain.

"*If I can, I will ride up and see you to-morrow.*" These words began, at length, to take meaning to my paralyzed faculties. Looking to that to-morrow, their waning life came back a little—but only a little. I was not clear and strong about it, as if it had been an absolute promise; which I knew he would have kept if it were possible. "*If I can,*" meant if so many things would permit; and then I thought, perhaps he said it because I felt so very miserable; he pitied me, and wished to say something that would comfort me.

But if he should come? Ah! then, indeed, for a little time.

at least, I should be happy ! and my child's heart rebounded, as the hope grew in strength. I began to dwell on the details of the visit ; when would he come ? how long would he stay ? what would he have to tell me ?—much about the lake, no doubt ; which I thought must be an object of as profound interest to him as to me. I was kindly treated on that day—not, I think, from any perception of my great needs; but the parting, at once, with several persons, whose courtesy and social power had, for a time, very much relieved the monotonous weariness of her life, had softened aunt's own feelings. She seemed more human, and far more womanly, in this new manifestation. But nothing gave me enduring hope or confidence. Even the buoyancy inspired by the expected visit, lifted me but little above my intense depression, into which I continually sank back, as the days that were to follow to-morrow, passed before my desponding thoughts. These fluctuations of feeling were terrible.

The dinner hour came. I had not tasted food that day, nor could I now. My whole nature refused it ; and thus, the inattention with which I was generally treated, became a blessed liberty. While they were at table, I walked out under the trees where the tents had been. The day, so far, had been one of the finest and clearest of those endless summer days, when, to the happy child, from sunrise to sunset is an age of delight. But the air was sultry now, and the deep shade of the large peach tree, whose leaves wavered in its fitful vibrations, was very welcome to me. I rested there, though I was neither strengthened nor tranquillized ; I fancied the atmosphere was oppressive, at times, and again hollow and unsatisfying to breathe. It made my feelings waver and change, almost as did the leaves over my head. I felt the approach of the dreadful sinking I had experienced on *that day*—not the breathlessness, nor the fear of death, but the chilly, stealing torpor—and I made a great effort, and commanded myself into the house. They were still sitting about the table, talking, as people do who have some topic of a little more interest than the every-day events of common life. They

were discussing those who had just left us ; expressing their preferences, criticising opinions, manners, persons, freely, but respectfully. Uncle liked, best of all, a Captain McClure, who had been to sea, and could spin a good yarn, he said, and laugh like a man. Aunt thought they were all pleasant, gentlemanly men, but Mr. Capron and Mr. Clarke were most agreeable to her. I did not at all care for their opinions, but I had gone into the house for refuge from myself, and from something that I dreaded without, and so I sat down and heard them. I took a seat in a remote part of the room, wishing to escape observation, for I felt there was no safety for me but in avoiding every possible expression of sympathy, and bearing, stoutly as I might, right on through my trials of spirit.

Uncle looked at me as I went in, but did not speak until after I had been sometime seated, and a pause came in their talk. Then he turned towards me, and said: "I wonder, now, who, of all the strange gentlemen, our Eliza liked the best? Was it Mr. Ramsay ?"

I trembled at the first question, but the second quite relieved me.

"No, uncle," I replied; "I did not like Mr. Ramsay nearly as well as the others. He teased me, and laughed at me too much."

"You liked that sober one better, that you were always talking with—Mr. Cranstoun. He is a noble fellow—not gay enough, though, I should think, for his company. I wonder how he came to be among them ?"

"He wanted to travel, he told me, and go through this wild country, just as they are going. He said his mother did not consent to let him come till the day they left Washington, and then she felt so grieved, that he had almost a mind to give it up for her sake ; but when he told her he would, if it would please her, she said no; he must go from her sometime, and he was old enough to begin now. And that little bit of a watch that he wears, she took off her own neck and put on his, when he bade her good bye."

This speaking of him was a great relief to me. I did not betray myself in it, and it unlocked the iron pressure under which I had kept myself so long. It withdrew my thoughts and emotions from preying upon myself as they had. I was better at once.

Uncle said his mother might well love such a son, and that his father was one of the best men in the United States.

"He thinks so, too," I said; "for he told me that he hoped to be as good a man as his father; and I know he would wish to be better, if he did not think he was very good, indeed."

"Come, Eliza," said aunt, rising, after we had all been silent a few moments, "it is time we were clearing the table. Isn't thee going to eat any dinner?"

The speaking as I had, had lifted the benumbing weight that had destroyed my appetite; I felt that I could take food; and I answered, "I will have a piece of pie."

"Get a knife and help thyself," she said, placing the plate near where I stood. But I was so nervous and fitful, that by the time I had cut a piece and laid it on a plate, I could not taste it. I felt the air again so lifeless.

Aunt had left the room, and I said, in a low voice, "Uncle, doesn't the air feel as I have heard you say it does at sea before gales, and water-spouts, and such things?"

He looked through the open door, and seemed estimating it for a moment, by his own sensations and the external evidences, and then he said: "It is very sultry, Eliza, and I shouldn't wonder if we have a heavy shower this afternoon. I must call the boys, and get the wheat in, if possible, before it comes on."

He rose, and, as I handed him his broad straw hat, I said: "Do you think there will be a gale with the rain?"

"Maybe," he replied; "but why are you so afraid of a gale, child? None of us are at sea; and if we were, and had a good ship under us, we should be safe enough."

"I am not afraid," I said—though my aching knees trembled by this time so that I could hardly stand; "but Mr. Cranstoun

told me they were going out in boats this afternoon. Do you think there will be danger if they do?"

"Not if they have good boats; and Major Kearney is too careful a man, I think, to run any risk, especially when the weather looks threatening."

The sky and the atmosphere were now changing rapidly, for even in the few moments that we had been speaking, I could feel the deepening shadow in them. I walked out at the door with uncle. There were no clouds yet visible, but the sun had a dull, angry look, as if the impalpable air had thickened before it; and while I stood and breathed, my sensations were as if vast chasms were alternately opening and closing around me. The sense of impending terror deepened every moment, and uncle, as he looked about, said, indistinctly, "I don't see it yet, but when it comes, it will be a rattler."

This was the term that always expressed, in his vocabulary, the most complete, the strongest, the most terrible thing—it was his highest superlative. I hurried within in dismay, that seemed to overwhelm and sink me. I cleared the things from the table—they were very few, and soon dispatched—and then I asked permission to go to the plum thicket. It was granted, for aunt was so insensitive to what seemed literally killing me, that she had not been warned of the coming tempest. I wished to be alone while it was passing. For myself, I had no dread of the utmost rage of the elements. I did not even think that in going out I should be exposing myself to their fury.

Mechanically I took the little basket, in which I always gathered fruits, and set off. When I left the house, the air was still wild with the same kind of invisible agitation that had prevailed so long. It had affected me for more than an hour, and yet, there were no clouds in the sky. There was only a darker shade in the atmosphere, under the southwest; and as I drew near the tall black walnut, in the big meadow, with my eyes fixed upon its top, I saw that its highest branches, with their leaves flutter ing wildly, were suddenly pressed down, and as suddenly uplifted

at times, when no wind moved the herbage on the ground at its foot. While I was crossing the meadow, the shadow in the southwest deepened, and before I reached the thicket, became palpable blackness. Short, hollow-sounding gusts now and then swept down upon the earth, and they seemed to have a peculiar force ; they struck against me like something almost material—with a pressure that was all on one side, against vacuum on the other—giving me thus a sensation as if I were being thrown to the earth. I looked into the black cloud, now moving steadily up the heavens like an irresistible army, for lightning, but as yet it was unbroken by a single flash. I lingered outside the thicket, where I could watch the coming on of this fearful enemy. With my face towards it, I saw it roll up, and up, towards the zenith, with an almost intelligent passion in its march. I heard the sound of thunder, low, apparently, from distance, but heavy and awful in this threatening war. I turned to see whence it could have proceeded, for I knew that lightning must precede thunder, and I had not seen the faintest flash, though watching with a kind of fascination that riveted my gaze. But I was now appalled to see the whole northeast sky wrapped in a blackness more awful than that of its confronting enemy.

My mental distress had been partly forgotten before, in watching the coming convulsion. But this discovery recalled and concentred my thoughts ; not upon myself, but on those whom, as I thought, this new danger threatened, more imminently than that I had been watching. Terror succeeded the interest I had felt. I knew that, if they were out, they were under that terrible cloud. On it came, occasionally rent by light, flickering, veiled streams of flame, that seemed as if they were deep—deep in its black depths, and could not reach the surface ; and the heavy, smothered thunder, which succeeded them, I fancied, shook the solid earth. The clouds approached each other, as if they had chosen the highest heavens for their battle-place, and the world beneath was but an unconsidered spectator of the

great shock. The wind came oftener, in sharper and more jerking blasts, and I was thinking, in terror, what would become of them if they were out now upon the lake, when a great, blinding glare of light, that illuminated the whole black heavens, and shadowed the earth, leaped from the upper border of the eastern cloud, and cleft its way far into the centre of the opposite one. It was followed by a crash, that made me cower to the ground, and before I dared to lift my head, in the deep, and almost instantaneous silence which followed, I felt two or three large drops of water penetrate the thin covering of my shoulders; and so tremendous was the concussion of forces, loosed by that mad stroke, that even while I was rising to my feet, the whole air seemed to become a vast waterfall. In the very act of standing up, I was drenched.

I had no fear, but a sense of awe—a consciousness of the presence of power, bowed me down. I watched the storm, and stood under the beating rain, which, for the first time, seemed to fall with a weight that made it painful to bear, and shut my eyes, when the tremendous flashes came, and the thunder smote me, and did not, for one moment that I recollect, think it would have been better to be in the house. There was, in the deepest depths of my soul, a faint consciousness of danger, to some one else—a little inmost kingdom, darkened and heavy, which was reserved from the fearful excitement, that surrounded me. All else was given up to the spirit of the tempest. I lived, outwardly, in the gloom of the flying clouds—in the glare, in the crash, in the falling torrent, in the wild winds, which tore and rent the leaves and branches of the tall trees, as if angry at being outdone, in this fearful trial of strength, by the elements above them.

Suddenly, I was recalled to a sense of my place on the earth, and among the things that surrounded me, by an awful crash behind me. The roar of innumerable waterfalls, pouring from the high bank—the rush of the rain, and the raging voice of the wind, had made me insensible to individual sounds, but this came

so near, and with such sharp, and heavy tones, that I turned to see what it was, and found myself still capable of something like astonishment, when I realized that the thicket yet stood entire. Large branches had been twisted off of the great black walnut, and whirled across the open meadow, till it was almost bared of its leaves and boughs, and thrice it had bent altogether, so fearfully, that I expected to see it overthrown, or broken off. The thicket and the trees immediately about me, were protected by the high, perpendicular bank on the opposite side. Only showers of leaves had fallen from them, and the fruit of the plum-trees lay in the water upon the ground, so thickly strewn, that I could scarcely avoid treading on them, as I penetrated the group, to see what had caused the noise that startled me. I waded the little alleys and embowered walks, now every inch submerged, till I came to the margin of the creek, which was low on this side. Already the dark, transparent water was changed to a thick mud-color, and the stream swollen so, that it washed the roots of the low trees where I was used to sit, and lave my burning feet, on dusty summer days. The whole length of the precipice opposite was a continuous waterfall, and—oh, fearful sight!—sheer down its face, which was seamed by the heavier currents, and looked so unnatural, that I could not have known it, but for remembering where I was, lay the trunk of the tree that Henry had told me, on Sunday, would fall in some storm of wind and rain, when he and I would not be out. The sight appalled me. No trace of the "Spring of the Fairies" was visible. Even the path by which we had ascended to it was washed into the creek.

I began to recall what he had said, and I thought: "There lies the tree, fallen, and I have been out in the storm that brought it down, and where is he?" And the dreariness of his possible situation began to so overpower my mind, now, that the fierce excitement which had caused me to forget it was somewhat abated, that I felt myself sink at the bare thought, to a state of almost helpless feebleness. The lack of food, the ter-

rible tension to which I had been held by the scene, that now overcame and depressed, instead of elevating and sustaining me; the drenching, and the chilling, in the rain and wind; the kind of superstitious terror, that crept into my blood, at sight of the fallen tree, well-nigh overpowered me. When I remembered that I was a long walk from the house; that till I reached the high land, on which it stood, I should have to wade all the way; that I was drenched, and faint, and cold, and that the rain was still falling, and the wind still blowing, though no longer dangerously, I wished that some one would come to help me home. I was afraid of myself.

I stooped, and picked a few plums out of the water, which I wiped on my frock, and ate. They relieved one troublesome sensation—the sinking one—so that I felt better able to walk, and, having gathered a few more, I set off on my dreary way home. The rain had subsided to a heavy drizzle; the air was chill, and occasional slight gusts of exhausted wind, pressed my wet garments to my shivering form and limbs; and, the increasing darkness terrified me, for I had no conception that any time had passed. I believed it was still midday, and, as the storm subsided, I expected the cheering light and warmth to surround me again.

But there was growing into my heart, at every step of that walk, a leaden sense of a terror I could not define. I was inexpressibly oppressed by it, and, by the time I had left the wet meadow, and climbed the soft, slippery hill, to the dairy-yard, I was so overcome, that it was with extreme difficulty I moved forward at all. There were no cows driven up yet—nobody in sight. And the chill, grey desolation of the scene, as I looked around myself, from the height, seemed to confirm my heaviest apprehensions. I went over the stile. As I stood upon the topmost step, I heard the swift tread of a horse. People were not accustomed to ride fast there, unless urged by something important. The sound, therefore, was a new alarm. I looked in the direction whence it came, and saw, through the misty dusk,

a man dashing, at full speed, down the road from the lake. I dropped, rather than sat down, upon the last step, when I reached the ground, to recover a little the shock it gave me ; for, I was as certain then, that he was coming with bad news to our house, as after he had uttered it. He came on swiftly, and turned the corner. Here the road was lower, and so wet, that he was obliged to slacken his speed. I rose, and walked forward, for I knew I had to hear it, and already I had suffered so much, that I felt I could bear it the better from my previous pain, as a person of slender energies is often safer, amid pestilential or violent diseases, than one in whom there are overflowing life and health.

As I drew near the house, he alighted, and passed in at the gate, where *he* had gone out a few hours before. How different was all now. The external desolation harmonized with that of my spirit, and helped me to bear the terrible message which I waited to hear him deliver to uncle. They met midway between the gate and the door.

" Good evening, Mr. Smalley," said the man, touching his hat, and looking very sad. He was one of the chain carriers.

" Good evening," was the reply ; and, after an instant, " we have had a terrible storm to-day."

" Yes, sir. It has been a terrible day with us, altogether. We have had a dreadful accident, down there, and Mr. McClure, and Mr. Ramsay, wanted me to come up, and let you know that he is to be buried to-morrow evening, at half-past three."

" He ! Who ?" exclaimed uncle.

" Mr. Cranstoun, sir. He was drowned about three o'clock this afternoon."

" My God !" exclaimed uncle. " Poor fellow ! Come in, and tell us how it happened."

They entered the house, and I followed, but remained in the entry, that I might hear every word. My going in would have necessitated my absence, to change my clothes.

" Why, you see," said the man, sitting down, and holding his

hat between his knees (I recall now every word, and look, and movement of his, as if they had passed before me but an hour ago,) "you see, the major, and five other gentlemen, with two of the men to row, went out about twelve o'clock, in a boat, to take soundings all around the mouth of the creek. The boat wasn't good, but it was the best they could get, and they couldn't know the storm was coming on, you know, sir. Well, they rowed slowly about, stopping here and there, to use their lines, and so on, and the first thing they knew, the wind began to blow, and the clouds to look ugly, and they were a mile or more from shore. They pulled in as fast as possible, but, in that shallow water, you know, sir, the waves rise very quick, and the boat being old, and not tight, nor well trimmed, she began to fill directly. They were not half way in yet, and to lighten her, somebody had to jump overboard. Well, Mr. Cranstoun was always reckoned the best swimmer of them all, and he was the first to go. He pulled off his boots and coat, and put a little watch, he always wore, into his mouth, and plunged into the water. Mr. Ramsay went next, and, in a few minutes, they all had to follow, for the boat filled. When they got on the beach, which they thought they all did, very near together, Major Kearney called out, 'Are we all here, gentlemen,' and then they missed Mr. Cranstoun."

"'O my God,' said Mr. Ramsay, 'Cranstoun is not here,' and he plunged in again at the same moment. Two of us followed him, for we knew he was tired, and we thought we might help them both. He went on and we followed, and when I came close up to him and asked if he knew at all where to go, he said 'yes,' but nothing more then, and we went so far that I began to be afraid for Mr. Ramsay, for he's a heavy man, you know sir, when all at once he went under. The water was very rough, and I was terribly frightened for fear of cramp or something getting him, when he came up and said, 'Here he is, boys; take him up as quick as you can go.' We took him between us—me and the other man—and Mr. Ramsay kept close to us, and

as soon as we got him ashore they went to work with hot stones, and bottles of warm water, and blankets, and blowing into his mouth, and they kept it up till a few minutes before I started. But he was clean gone, sir, and there was no chance at all. Mr. Ramsay cried over him, and said, 'How his mother would feel.' And then, sir, in spite of 'em all he went out again to dive for his watch. He said he should be so glad to get it for his mother."

"Did he find it?"

"Oh, no, sir; it was a little bit of a thing, not bigger than half a dollar. Of course he couldn't find it. They all feel pretty sober, ma'am," said the man in answer to an inquiry from aunt.

"Naturally, ma'am, they feel very sober. You see it might as well have been one of them that's left as he, and they all thought a deal of him too, and he deserved it."

Comments had no interest for me, and when I had heard so much I stepped into the room.

"Why, Eliza," exclaimed aunt, as if she had forgotten me, "where was thee in all the storm, and why didn't thee come before?"

"I was at the thicket," I replied, "and I got so wet, and there was so much water in the meadow that I could hardly get back."

"Well, get off thy wet things, right away. Thee looks enough to scare anybody."

"Ah," said the man, looking at me, "that is the little girl he thought so much of. There's bad news for you, little one, from your friend at the lake. Get on your dry clothes, and come here, and I'll tell it to you."

"I've heard it all," I said, "and I knew it before I came up from the meadow."

"Is the child going out of her wits?" exclaimed aunt, looking more excited than displeased. I was lighting a candle, for it was now too dark to dress myself without one, and she gazed

sharply into my face, as the light shone upon it, and said, "Don't talk such foolishness any more. Go and dress."

I was no more than the ordinary time changing my garments. Not a tear came into my eyes, though I thought of only one thing, almost of one word while I was doing it,—"*He was clean gone, sir, and there was no chance at all.*" This said clearly that there was a possibility he might have been brought back to life. It would be impossible to express the agony of earnestness with which the words inspired me. *They* had tried but a few hours; I would have toiled till the stars paled in the full light of the coming day. I would have wearied the eternal forces of nature. I would have desired, and willed, so strongly, that if life hovered near its deserted tenement, the great power of my love should have recalled it.

This one thought was the source of my keenest suffering. But for it I should have been comparatively tranquil that night. I remember the evening but dimly. Once I was moved to beseech that I might go down, with a wild kind of hope, that if I could touch him, life would yet return. I recollect only one fact that impressed me, as relieving my immediate suffering. The cows were not to be driven up, as I had first feared they might be, and milked after dark; and this seemed to lift the burden, which was now fast becoming too heavy for me. I was under that kind of mechanical rigor, that never permitted me to think of evading an exaction, or getting rid of a task. Whatever affected my strength, or spirits, or, to whatever extent they declined, I looked for no favor. I never thought of illness, or the exemption it would afford, from what seemed to be fast becoming impossibilities, but I moved about the house, cleared the supper-table—after a vain attempt to take a morsel of bread—and in due time we all retired.

The clouds had all vanished before we went to bed, and the half moon rode as tranquilly in the dark, blue sky, as if all nature had been as placid, since she last shone there, as at that moment—as if a terrible and treacherous deed had not been

done in her absence. I had found opportunity to ask the man, in the course of the evening, privately, "if he thought Henry had suffered much;" and he then told me, what he had not said before: "That Mr. Ramsay, in passing him, saw him swimming, as he thought, on his back, and he wondered at it at the time; but, as he was accustomed to all sorts of exercises in the water, and as, with the rest of them, who were not as good swimmers, it was rather an earnest struggle to reach the shore, he did not pause; but that as soon as he was missed, Mr. Ramsay was appalled to think, that at that very moment he, perhaps, needed help, and might have been saved. That led to his plunging in after him, so instantly, and striking directly for the spot where he found him. They thought," he said, "it was the watch that had caused his death, by strangling, or in some other way."

How I passed that awful night I do not in the least know. I was not conscious of sleeping at all; but my utter exhaustion must have produced a mental condition, corresponding to it, at times, for I stood with him again on the raft, and by the "Spring of the Fairies," and heard again, as distinctly as I had in the morning, his last words. Then I was hand in hand with him, above the black clouds and the raging winds, floating smoothly along, in a region so exquisitely beautiful, and pure, and bright, that the memory of the storm, which I seemed to have been in, and to have risen from instantaneously, was like what I had heard of hell. Again, I was conscious of being very cold and full of pain, and when the morning came, I believed that all I had enjoyed was a dream, and my sufferings only a reality, for I could scarcely stand, when I rose to my feet, and from the top of my head, downwards, I was one great agony. Every motion produced a strange worrying sensation, as if I had been overstretched and could not contract to my natural dimensions.

CHAPTER XXII.

"High among the dead, who give
Better life to those who live."

"The wounded heart rests in the body's pain."

Uncle and aunt were going down to the funeral. I did not know whether I wished to go or not. I doubted myself. I had never seen death since I stood by my mother's coffin, and I doubted if I should be able to bear the sight of him, lying, as I remembered her, silent, and cold, and insensible, to my great anguish, without doing, or saying, or looking something that I must not. I felt so much pain, too, in my head and all over my body, that I shrunk from the rough road and the hard wagon.

I did not doubt they would take me, if I asked them to; or they, perhaps, would expect me to go, though uncle remarked upon my looking so ill, and aunt said, I had taken cold, from being out in the storm yesterday. It was not considered necessary to notice my condition further. I ate an early sweet apple, and drank a cup of milk, for my breakfast, and, when all was done for the morning and they were preparing to start, I said to aunt: "Am I to stay here alone to-day?"

"It wouldn't hurt thee, I suppose," was the answer; "but," she added, a moment after, with a little more kindness, "I'll stop, as we go by, and ask Betsey to come down and stay with thee. Shall I?"

What a shock the bare suggestion gave me! Betsey! I had forgotten, it seemed to me, for years, that such an individual lived. I was older, by a whole life experience, than she was—and such an experience—so grand, so sweet, so elevating, so entirely

separating me from common life and natures, like hers. She would never *be* again, to me. I would not have chained my suffering soul to her presence for all the earth contained.

I replied to aunt, that "I would rather she would not send her, for I should not feel lonesome, and if I did, I could go and see the Edwardses." So I said, but meant nothing of the kind.

"Or thee can ride up with us, and get out at the woods road, and walk up to Jacob Radford's, if thee'd like to."

I scarcely knew what to say to this suggestion. At one moment I felt such a shrinking from myself, and, at the next, from everybody else. At one moment I desired to nestle close to some full-grown heart, that could feel I had a sorrow, and help me to bear it; and at the next I felt it belonged to me, alone, and that I should be unworthy of it, if I sought to throw it upon another. I was rather glad, than otherwise, that she had not, at the first question, suggested my going with them. If she had, I thought it would have been weak, and cowardly to say, I did not wish to go; but now, it was not left to me to decide. Finally, I was determined upon staying at home, alone; and I did, all the long day, till the sun drew low in the west. A part of the time I spent in bed, and a part walking, as in a dream, from place to place, where I had sat or stood with him. I remember only one wish that I earnestly entertained on that day. It was, that he had said, "that his spirit would as certainly be near me, if he *died*, as if he went away, and remained on earth." I believed, that if he had said so, I should not have doubted it; for I thought, if he were alive, and warm, and thinking today, I would never—never again, grieve at his absence.

When they came home, uncle said I looked pale, and, as if I had lost flesh in the last two days; and, I think, a vague perception of my great need of compassion must have dawned upon him, for he folded me, a moment, in his warm arms, and said: "You have been very lonesome, I am afraid, to-day, Eliza, but it was better to stay here, than to go down and see him. looking so badly. He was so dark, and swollen."

"Oh, don't, don't, uncle!" I almost shrieked, laying my hand quickly on his mouth. "Don't tell me of that."

"What ails the child!" he exclaimed; for I could not restrain myself from shaking with convulsive violence, as the dream, which I had unconsciously cherished, of his grave and solemn beauty, such as it had grown to me, being laid away, never to be seen again, had been rudely swept into nothingness by these thoughtless words. "What ails you, Eliza? It doesn't hurt you, does it, to know that?"

"Oh, yes, uncle; it makes me feel such an aching here, in my heart. I am so sorry you told me!"

"Well, child, I am sorry, too; but I thought you would like to hear about it."

"No, not that—anything else."

"Well, then, Mr. Ramsay told me he was going to dive again for the watch, some time before they go back, when the lake is quite smooth. He wishes very much to find it, to take to his mother."

"I hope he will," I said. But I felt, at this moment, that except the watch had been his mother's, and she had given it him, it belonged more to me. No one could suffer as I did; and I, to whom no word would ever be spoken, felt a right to demand consolation—I, the depth of whose sorrow no soul would ever know. This perception of my own desolation, compared with that of those who would be thought of, comforted, and talked to about him; who would have, carefully restored to them, every little memento of his leaving; who would be at liberty to say how much they loved him, and how much more he deserved than they could give—penetrated me with so bitter a sense of the hardness of my lot, that I laid down my head and wept. I had not shed a tear before, and I was torn to pieces by the violence of my grief. And that aching at my heart was so suffocating, so fearful, nothing ever described it but words which I met with, years after, when death had taken another of my beloved; and then they portrayed the agony of that unforgot-

ten moment, as well as of the later one : "And the iron had entered into his soul."

I wept long, and was at length only stopped by the call to my nightly task—"The cows are here, Eliza." It was as irresistible to me, almost, as death. I do not recollect that I had ever got so far as to wish for, or think of, the possibility of being released from this performance, now so dreadfully repugnant to my feelings—so severe a tax upon my little strength. But I was released, in a very unexpected and painful manner, that night. Turning quickly about, in the dairy-yard, as I stood near a small trough that lay upon the ground, I fell across it, in such a way that, when I rose, I could not raise my right foot. To my inexperience, the new sensation was frightful ; for I seemed to have a leaden foot, instead of the living one I had stood and moved upon a moment before. I was much alarmed ; and, in making another great effort to learn if I had still my own natural foot, I fell again, because I could not lift, it seemed to me, the weight of a feather. It would not move, however earnestly I willed that it should.

There was no one near me ; but I succeeded in calling the boy from the other side of the grain-house, and sent him to tell uncle to come out. He looked a little surprised, and began to speak, but I said, "Don't stop a minute. I have hurt my ankle, and I want him to come and help me into the house." He was the same boy who had asked Mr. Dole of his married life ; and he now did as I requested, without a syllable more. When uncle came, which he did quickly, he helped me up, and I tried, holding by him, to walk ; but it was impossible, and the effort produced, almost instantly, an intolerable pain, from which I had until that moment been free.

He took me in his arms, and, when he got in the house, placed me in a chair, with another before me, on which he carefully laid the disabled foot. The pain, by this time, was excruciating. It seemed to attack like something that would destroy me. He called aunt, and she came, looking not pleased or tender at

finding me helpless; and together they proceeded to remove the shoe and stocking, every touch giving me added torture. My ankle was already very much swollen; and when it had been pronounced a very bad sprain, and bandaged, with an application of salt and vinegar, I was soundly lectured upon the impropriety of falling down in such a manner as to injure myself, and left to bear my suffering as well as I might. Uncle brought a pillow, after she left the room, and placed it tenderly under my foot, and told me that he had had many sprains, but they always got well, and so this would in a few days, and that the pain would be nearly gone by to-morrow morning.

"To-morrow morning, uncle!" I said. "You don't know what it is, if you think I can bear it till then, and it grows worse all the time." How it seemed to spread around and shut in my life, taking me wholly captive. I had soon to be undressed and carried to bed, which I shrunk from, because of the solitary closeness of my room. In summer, I slept in a small, hot bedroom; in winter, in a large, cold one; and I dreaded now the imprisonment of those walls, when I wanted so much larger space and more air. Tears, that were wrung from me by the intense agony I was in, rained down my face, otherwise perfectly calm; and as uncle laid me down, he said, "Now, try to be a woman, Eliza, and bear it as well as you can. It won't last long, and, by and by, I'll come to you again. Shall I leave the door open?"

"Oh, yes," I replied; "and don't put the window down, please. I can hardly breathe now." He had turned the button, to close it, but he left it open, and went out.

What a fearful enemy to the young soul is physical pain! How exultingly it seems to seize upon every atom and fibre of the being, where strong life and energy alone confer the pleasure which is the conscious birthright of that season. Oh, deal compassionately and lovingly with the young child that suffers bodily pain! Let no impatient word or hasty movement of yours increase it; for never, never, can your humanity take on so

revolting a form, as in acts of negligence or cruelty to such a sufferer.

All that night, I lay in a torture which only grew a little less keen as the delicate life of my sensibilities gave way before its unremitting pressure. Before going to bed, they came and wet the bandages afresh. Aunt was very ungracious, and the more so the more she became convinced of the extent of my injury. I begged that the bandage might be loosened; and when it was done, and the frightful swelling exposed, she said, sourly, I wouldn't be able to step on my foot for three weeks. She estimated the misfortune so purely by her own share in it, that, in my disgust, I forgot, for one single instant, my agony. I was about to speak, but uncle gave me a look of compassion and entreaty that silenced me; and they left me to darkness, solitude, and my bitter suffering.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"What love we about those we love the best,
Better than their dear voices?"

I was so much exhausted, from the agitation and grief that had preceded my injury, as well as the pain, and the two long, sleepless nights I had passed, that it required an effort to open my eyes when uncle entered the room next morning. And he was stepping silently back, thinking me asleep, when I spoke:

"Oh, do come, uncle! I am not asleep at all, but I am so tired!"

"How is the ankle, my dear child?"

"I believe," I said, "it's as bad as ever, only I can't feel the pain so hard as it has been."

"Let me see," he said. And, throwing the clothes back, he attempted to raise my foot, and bring it forward; but the sharp

pain made me shriek so that he desisted; and, on loosing the bandage, the expression of his face assured me that the worst fears of the evening were justified by the indications of the morning. I could not move my foot; it was as incapable of the slightest motion above the toes, as if it had been of cast iron.

"Raise, my head, uncle, a little, and let me see it."

"It won't feel any better for your looking at it, nor for anything else, I am afraid, for a good while. It is a very bad ankle, my dear, see."

It was so dreadfully swollen and discolored, that the glance I got at it sickened me; and I dropped my head, with a feeling that was partly faintness, partly dismay. "Uncle," I asked, "shall I ever be able to walk again?"

"Oh, yes; don't be afraid of that, Eliza; but it will be a good while first, and you will have to keep very still."

He replaced the bandage, and applied the lotion.

"Will *you* come and wet it, and see to it, sometimes?" I asked.

"Yes, when I am about the house, I will; and you mustn't fret if aunt does scold a little. You know she is not patient at any time, and now she misses you, and has a great deal more to do, she will be less so, maybe, than usual."

That day I slept a good deal. Sleep was very sweet. My pain was very much lessened. If I did not attempt to move I scarcely felt it; and the peace of Heaven seemed to pervade my worn-out being. The exhaustion favored my mental tranquillity, for nature could not again receive the guest she had expelled, till she had refreshed herself by rest. With the repose came a little appetite, and uncle at each meal brought me something, the nicest there was on the table. At tea, he made a piece of toast, with his own hand, for me, which so appealed to my gratitude that I could have eaten it without appetite. That night I slept too, but old Tom had to go elsewhere, for when he jumped on the bed, he gave me such a pang that the whole house rung with my outcry.

Next day I begged uncle to send James up to Mrs. Radford,

for I began to feel the loneliness, when I could not sleep, and the old burden began to settle heavily and wearily on my heart. The still, slow hours gave me back all that my pain had, for the time, displaced, and more—they restored to me words and looks, and tones, that in busy life would, perhaps, have forever escaped me. Then came the bitterness of anguish for my loss, and the fearful inquiry, "where is now the spirit, the being, the man, the friend, whose presence had so blessed me?" This was a question which my faculties could not grasp. I could see nothing clearly when I thought about it. Dim, vague, confused hopes on the one hand; on the other, hard, scouting, contemptuous rejection, consumed my earnest desire for light. He had only assured me that God lived beyond this life, and my best hope for him, was so shadowy, and broken, that it barely served to keep alive my yearnings—it did not in any measure satisfy them.

When Mrs. Radford came, I got her to conceal Mr. Ramsay's book, and take it home, for in my helpless condition I dreaded it might be found in my trunk, and so be lost to me, or be the cause of some ill-temper. She sat by me most of the afternoon, and talked in a low, soothing voice, about her own life, which had been eventful, too, for she had had three stepmothers.

Her nature, though not deep, was sweet and hopeful, and she helped me greatly, by filling up my picture of the future with many of its lesser details. Young as I was, I had the long and rugged road of the years in full view—and the towering height beyond, which I could never lose sight of for any long time. She saw, and brought to my notice what I was too prone to overlook—the little wayside flowers that sparkled along its borders—the brooks that glanced in gladness—the birds that cheered its solitary places.

How sweetly the influence of such meek, loving, and thankful spirits, falls upon the earnest soul. How much she unconsciously suggested to me of comfort, that in my anguish, I had forgotten, that in the struggle for which I was preparing, I

had ignored—the love of brothers and sisters ; the world full of people, waiting to be made friends, to replace the one who was gone. I dared not let her know what I had lost in Mr. Cranstoun, but she understood that it was enough to cause me great grief.

She told me I should be able to be on my feet after a few days, and that her husband thought the pigeons would come again, this fall, there were such great quantities of beech-nuts ; and then she was going to beg aunt to let me stay with them a week, so that she and I could go sometimes together to the top of a little cleared hill, back of their house, where we could see miles of them flying, every morning and evening. I did not much believe I should go, but it was pleasant to think of it, while I was obliged to lie so still. It made me very melancholy to see her prepare to go home, and I said, "Julianna, won't you ask aunt to let me have a book, while I have to lie here?"

"Yes. Does she know what this book is, you asked me to take home for you?"

"No."

"Well, then, I can tell her I will give you one, and she will never know where it came from."

"But it has Mr. Ramsay's name in it," I suggested.

"It is on a fly leaf. Shall I tear it out?" she asked.

"Yes."

"There, now, I'll go with it in my hand, and she'll never dream but I brought it for you."

When she returned, she came with a bright, pleasant face, and gave me the book, with a message, that I might read ten a day, if I could get them, as long as I couldn't stand, or do anything else.

How much I wished for those Henry was to have got for me ; how much I wished that he could come in and speak to me. The more I thought, the more I felt that it would be dreadful to be long confined, and have nothing to do but think.

I read Mackenzie's Narrative three times over, while I lay

there. It had the most absorbing interest for me, because it introduced me to a new race of men, and gratified my intense curiosity with respect to different human conditions, as well as the products and character of the earth in those regions so far away—so wintry, and strange to us. I wished very much that I could taste the pemmican, and see the Esquimaux eat seals and whale blubber.

I sat up in a few days, and then spent a fortnight more in a chair with my disabled limb on a pillow; then several days crawling about the house and door-yard. Aunt had been cautioned about driving me to the use of my foot, by an old physician who called one day in passing, and who was sober enough to express the opinion, on examining my ankle, that it was one of the worst sprains he had ever seen; and that a little injudicious use of it, might lame me for life. And then he turned full upon me his large, black eyes—they had flabby, puffy, lids, that were so, I suppose, in consequence of his excessive use of liquor, and said, "Now, young one, mind what I say; and if you don't want to be a crippled old woman, don't attempt to stand on that foot at all, as long as you feel a little sharp pain, away in here, deep," laying his finger on the joint rather heavily.

I shrunk, for it was yet very painful to the touch.

"Never mind that," he said; "I knew it would hurt you to bear on a little, and I did it to make you remember what I say. Now, remember it," and he bore on lightly, again, but so as to hurt still. I threw his hand off as quick as thought. "Don't do that again," I said, looking full at him. "I shall not forget what you say. I shouldn't if you had not hurt me at all, and I don't like it."

"No," he said; "I suppose not; but I like to try little folks, sometimes, and see if they are like big folks. Pretty much all of a piece, ma'am," he said, turning towards aunt, and speaking in a moralizing tone. "They all seem to come out of one mill." And presently they fell into talk upon religion, a subject on

which they were fully agreed, and were so uninteresting to me that my disability became a very severe imprisonment, while it was going on.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"By the holy instinct of my heart,
By the hope that bears me on,
I have still my own undying part
In the deep affection gone."

I LONGED intensely for my usual activity before I recovered it, yet, often in my utmost impatience, I felt that it had been good for me to be quiet a while—it was good that it came so soon upon my grief; so quickly after the experience that gave me a past. Until this time I had had only the future—the present was nothing to me. My life had now, like the tree that was fallen into the creek, a soil on the side which had before been waste, in which to strike roots for nurture and strength. The happiness had awakened, and the suffering elevated and strengthened me. In those still days, the light reflected from the past, upon my inner self and the future, showed me more clearly than years of less deep experience would, what I had to struggle for, the strength I could bring to the conflict, and the difficulties I had to meet. My doubts as to his immortality were the great pain of that time, but finding myself always feeble and confused, in thinking of it, I came at last to dwell less and less upon it, and to fall back with a greater sense of rest upon what had been. The one fact of that existence, was nearly all that time then contained for me. It was also the root of my henceforth; for, whenever, or whatever, he now was, he had been; and his, the larger, had embraced and become a law to my lesser life, whose loyalty neither absence nor death could destroy. His remembered words and tones—his expressed

wishes, and the loftiness of his nature, seemed to me scarcely separable from my own inmost being and purposes. They were so much added strength, so much clearness and light, where before had been cloud and darkness. All that I knew he would wish, I resolved to be, and to do; and that resolution filled to the brim the little measure I was intrusted to bear into the coming years. I could not know that he *was*, but it was very sufficing that he had been. Thenceforward I looked through clearer eyes upon the world.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death!"

"Day is for mortal care—
Eve for glad meetings round the joyous hearth;
Night for the dreams of sleep, the voice of prayer;
But all for thee, thou mightiest of the Earth."

THREE weeks between summer and autumn change the face of nature greatly, in the temperate climates. In truth, we were both much changed when we met again. I had bleached, in my confinement, nearly to the color of my race, and grown something slighter than even my former self, which was certainly needless. The cornfields were russet; and in the sunnier exposures, even golden. Faint tints of orange and scarlet, the preludes of glorious death, were visible upon the great forest, beyond the field in which the harvest-wagons stood, and the thinned foliage of the orchard trees showed the burden of the bending branches very distinctly. I longed so very much to get abroad and breathe the tranquil air, and renew my loving acquaintance with the dear old mother, who had so often comforted me, that when a wagon-load of corn was drawn to the granary one day, and they were going for another, I begged that I might be allowed to get in and ride out to the field. It was not yet safe for me

to walk or stand, for any considerable time, but I could sit by the piles of corn, and fill the baskets with the ears.

Oh! it was heavenly peace there, under the misty autumn sunshine, amid the rustle of the uncut harvest, with thoughts of the plenty and comparative rest of winter before me. While there, I saw several small flocks of birds fly towards the lake, which uncle said were pigeons—forerunners—messengers sent to see if the beech-nuts were ripe, and falling; and as soon as they found them down in abundance, they would give notice, and then there would come a million for every one of those two or three dozen; and a few days showed me, in fact, what he foretold. Mr. Radford had said there were miles of these birds, flying so closely together that they darkened the day, and that you might watch steadily for a long time and not see a piece of sky big enough to make a pair of gloves; but though I had great confidence in what he said, I thought this could not be literally true; and it astonished me, more than anything I now remember, to find that it was.

They commenced, with daylight, moving northward, and, with occasional breaks in one part or another of the heavens, their spread wings curtained them till towards noon. Then there were a few hours—as well as I can remember, about three—when we saw only occasional parties, the smallest of which would have before been considered a very large flock; and, this time past, the return flight commenced. Uncle said they did not like to stay in the forest bordering the lake, and it was very evident that they did not, for they flew incessantly till nightfall, and often till long after. It was a sublime mystery, to which I loved to give myself up; and while I was in the field—for I contrived to make myself so useful there, that uncle, at my request, asked for me every morning—I used to pick up the corn, and watch them, with a dreamy, delicious rambling of my thoughts, and a curiosity that could never be satisfied, as to their habits and places of living when they were not here. Uncle told me that their constant eating of the sharp, angular little nuts, produced irritation and

inflammation of the throat and craw, of which a great many died in the woods. I wondered at this, for I had found by observation and much thinking, and talking with Henry, and other persons, that animals living by their own instincts, were never sick. I could not then think that it might be a benevolent means of reducing their excessive numbers, after they had enjoyed a vigorous life of health and plenty.

The autumn advanced very rapidly. Dark, gusty clouds flew swiftly over the landscape, and short, chilly rains fell during the nights, making the earth look dreary in the gray, cloudy mornings, or glitter with frost when the sun rose in the clear sky. The apples were gathered, and the harvests of the garden and fields nearly completed, when a heavy rain set in one afternoon, and continued falling, in increasing volume, until dark. We had not been long asleep, when I was awakened by a noise of heavy blows upon the outside of the house. I listened in a freezing sort of terror, for the rain literally roared upon the roof and walls, and what, I thought, could have sent any one out on such a night? Only something fearful, certainly! The knocking remitted for a moment, but no one anwered from within; and though my blood curdled at the thought of rising to call uncle, I determined to do so, if he should not be roused by the next effort of the applicant. This time, however, his blows fell so heavily and fast, that they would have broken any slumber but the last one. I grew more alarmed every moment, but presently I heard, or rather felt, a heavy footstep on the floor, and uncle passed into the passage, inquiring, in a loud voice, who was there? I could not hear the reply, but he said, in answer to it: "Good God! don't tell me that!"

There was, indeed, something terrible. But the man had come inside now, dripping as he was, and I recognized the voice. It was a nephew of uncle's, who lived very near the Petersons. I had hardly thought of Mrs. Peterson since I last saw her, but I knew that an event was then approaching that might endanger her life, and the first tones of his voice alarmed me for her. I

heard him say : " If Aunt Phebe will go up, I'll wait for her, and you needn't go out, uncle. Priscilla wanted her at first very much, but they didn't think she would live till I got back."

Aunt Phebe declined going, notwithstanding the urgency of the message ; and one could scarcely wonder at it, considering the dreadful night, and that, though active and hardy, she was no longer young. She would go up early in the morning, but he was to come with a message, if there were worse news before she got there.

I slept no more that night, and we were up with the first grey of dawn. When I looked out to the beech-woods, the sky seemed to be resting upon their tops. Their few scattered leaves bathed themselves in the clouds, and the boughs bent and strained dismally in the angry wind. I was intensely anxious to hear of Mrs. Peterson, and resolved upon seeing her again, if she were still living. A horse was brought for aunt to ride, and an early breakfast prepared, that she might start at once. It was a mile and a half or more, and a dreadful road, of course, through the forest, that was now flooded. When breakfast was over, and she had gone into the little bedroom to prepare (we were now in our respective winter quarters), I followed her—having first hastily cleared and set the table back, and brushed the crumbs from the floor—and asked her if I might ride behind her, to see Mrs. Peterson. I must have made the request very earnestly, for she looked at me some time without speaking. Then she said: "Thee could go, if thee wants to so much, but the road is very wet, and I don't know how the horse could carry us both."

"I am very light," I pleaded, "and I'll walk all the way—except where I can't get along on foot—I want so very much to see her." It was a foolish request as it appeared upon the surface, and the granting it scarcely less so, for if the sufferer still lived, my presence could not be more ill-timed in the small house, which was already full ; and if not, I could not be expected either to help or comfort the bereaved.

We set out, however. I was to ride through the cleared land,

and walk in the dryest parts of the forest. The rain had very much abated, and uncle warranted us a clear sky before one o'clock. When we reached the woods-road, as it was called, I got down, for, by leaving the cleared track, and walking among the trees, I trod upon a substantial carpet of sere beech and maple leaves, clean and gay with the bright frost colors of the season. When we came to a low, watery spot, I stepped upon one of the many stumps at the roadside, and aunt took me up again. Mr. Radford's house was the only one we passed, and we saw no one moving, nor was any smoke coming from the chimney.

"Julianna must have gone up to Priscilla's," said aunt.

"And do you think it likely that she's living, because she stays so late?" I asked.

"I can't tell at all by that," she said; "but we shall soon know."

I got down once more, and up again, before we reached the house. The rain had then ceased, and patches of blue sky were visible between the walls of parted clouds in the northwest. This was a new house—a cabin in the woods—to which they had removed but a short time before, and where I had never yet been. The tall trees seemed to envelop the low, small hut. They grew up to its very walls, and green stumps stood close to the door. There was not even a garden spot yet cleared. It was mud to the very threshold. On a stump, at the left hand of the door, sat Tom, holding one of his little twin-brothers; and all around, wherever a safe place of deposit could be found for them, were strewn a bed, pillows, bedding, and other things, that might have been used about a sick person, who had no further need of them. I had never seen any such array about the house of death, but I felt at once what it indicated. Aunt rode up beside one of the great stumps, and I alighted and held the rein while she dismounted. She went in, and sent Tom to take care of the horse.

As he drew near, I saw traces of tears on his cheeks, and

I said, "Tom, I am very sorry for you. Couldn't your father get a doctor here, to save her?"

"He got here after she was dead—an hour or more after. He said it was just as well, for he couldn't have done anything to help her. She had worked too hard when we moved!" His tears flowed afresh as he told me.

I entered the house very softly. Mr. Peterson sat by the fire, looking grieved and helpless. The other twin-child stood at his knee, begging to go to mammy; and one or two of the older ones sat about, silent, in different parts of the room. White curtains draped the bed, and concealed whatever lay upon it from our sight. Aunt stood near its head, talking in a low tone to Mrs. Peterson's mother and Mrs. Radford, who sat near, with a bundle of something on her lap, which she regarded with great care and tenderness. I looked for Rhoda, for I did not like to stand without speaking to some one, and I could not approach any of the grown persons. She was not in the house; and I stepped towards the back door, which opened from without as I approached it, and she entered, leading two children next older to the twins. She came in with a quick, impatient, noisy movement, that made me involuntarily lift my hand in token of silence.

"I can't help it!" she said, in an irritable tone; "they won't mind me. They want to play out there, in the mud, and pretty soon they'll be so dirty, they can't come into the house any more than the pigs. And I'm sure I don't know who's going to wash all their clothes, now," she added, bursting into tears, that seemed to me as much of vexation as grief.

I could not respect her. I could not say to her what I had to Tom; but feeling that I must do something, I took the two children and drew them aside in the corner, opposite their father, and began to talk to them. The elder one knew me very well, and the other did not seem to feel me a stranger; so they suffered me to interest them, and listened very gravely to what I said. I told them of my ride and walk up, and how, when I

went away from the road among the trees, the dried leaves covered the ground, and a great, great many dead pigeons lay among them—so many, that sometimes I had to look for a place to set my foot without treading upon them—and how very sorry it made me to see them there.

"Have you seen mammy, Lizzy?" said the elder of my auditors.

"No," I replied, softly; "don't speak of her now."

"She's in the curtains there," whispered the child; "and Rhoda says she'll be put in the ground to-morrow, and then she's goin' to take care of us; but I don't want her to. She strikes me, and mammy never did, unless I was very ugly."

"Well, you must be good, and not get yourself dirty, and then Rhoda won't do it either."

"Oh, yes! I know she will now," insisted the child. "She always does when she has a chance."

It distressed me to hear this, for I pitied the little children, partly from my natural tenderness, and partly from my own experience; but I encouraged and amused them with my best efforts till Mrs. Radford called me to her.

"Do you want to see the baby?" she said, removing the folds of blanket in which it was enveloped.

"Yes; but is it alive?" I asked, in astonishment, as I saw her lay aside one thickness after another, from its face.

"Yes, indeed!" she said, with a woman's tender pride and interest in it; "it is alive, and strong, for such a very little thing: look at it."

"Oh, how very small!" I exclaimed, shrinking back as I looked on the red, spotted, downy face. "How does it breathe in all that cloth? I should think you would kill it, wrapping it so very much. How old is it?"

She looked at the shadow of the sun in the door. "About ten hours."

"How long has she been dead?"

"She died about two o'clock this morning."

"Did she know the baby or any of the other children?"

"No; she had fits, and didn't know anything at all after I came into the house. They said she had till a little while before."

"Can I see her?"

"Yes;" and she drew aside the white drapery, and I gazed with awe upon the placid form and face, thinking much upon the fearful mystery of life which they, and the little fragile atom in Mrs. Radford's hands, revealed to me. Mrs. Peterson's countenance had never looked so handsome. The color was not at all ghastly, only a little more delicate than the ruddy brown I had always seen upon it. Her lips were yet red, and all her features wore their most motherly and tender expression. Her heart was all maternal, and the spirit, doubtless, concerned for the little flock from which she had been so suddenly separated, hovered yet near them and its deserted tenement, with the tenderness that had so often clothed her honest countenance with this sweet look. I took the curtain in my own hand and stood a long time, studying the face, which only by its silence and immobility, represented death to me. The full hues and life tints were not at all like what I had imagined death to be, or like the dim vision I had of my poor mother in her coffin, after a year's wasting illness; and yet it was death, the grand repose, which no outcry of child or friend could disturb—the rest which life had never permitted to that ardent, helpful spirit—the calm after the long effort.

It was beautiful and comforting to me to see her so. Very reverently and shrinkingly I laid my fingers on her cheek. I expected a touch of icy coldness, but either there yet lingered a little vital warmth, or the great blazing fire exactly opposite, helped the illusion. It seemed to me little different from life. I spoke to Mrs. Radford, and she said perhaps she was not yet quite cold, or I was mistaken. Whatever it was, it removed my last horror of death. She, lying there in that sweet rest, did not seem to me a victim, but one to whom some great good

had come. I felt compassion for those who were deprived of her ever-ready help and care, but no grief for her.

As I turned away at length, after having, in some measure, satisfied my intense interest, Mrs. Radford said: "You and Mrs. Peterson were such great friends, I expected you would feel very badly when you saw her."

"I don't feel badly at all," I said, "for her; except that I shall wish sometimes, I know, that I could see her; but she looks so happy that I believe she cannot be sorry she has died. But the poor little children, who will take care of them now?"

"Their grandmother, I suppose," said Julianna, "and their father, and sister Rhoda, and Tom. Grandmother will have to take this little one, I think," she said, with a brooding, tender movement over it. "It's too small to be trusted to anybody else—so it is, poor little one."

And grandmother did take it, and in the winter she brought it to our house for three days—the brightest, most beautiful, and irresistible little creature, I thought, that ever was born. I had never before been with a baby twenty-four hours together. It was one of the common blessings which I had always been denied.

I thought much upon Mrs. Peterson's death. The family was often alluded to, and herself often spoken of, always with as near an approach to affection as I ever heard aunt express for anybody, besides her own brothers and sisters. I thought much upon the two deaths, and my life seemed to grow larger while I remembered, sometimes with a dreadfully aching heart, "I have lost two this year whom I loved."

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Alas! what kind of grief should thy heart know?
Thy brow and cheek are smooth as waters be
When no breath troubles them."

But the year was destined to be marked by another event scarcely less painful to me. Some weeks after Mrs. Peterson's death, on one of the few fine warm days that preceded the setting in of winter, I was looking along the road one morning, standing near the front door, when a light wagon, drawn by one horse, was driven up to the gate, and the two persons who were in it, alighted and walked into the yard. One was a common-looking man, whom I recognized at once. The other was a stranger, whose elegance of person, manner and dress, attracted my attention instantly. His movement and bearing were like those of the few gentlemen I had seen, but even more graceful and pleasing. His dress was the perfection of neatness and elegance; black pantaloons, a dress coat of very dark wine color, enlivened by gilt buttons of moderate size, and a vest of the deepest mazarine blue velvet, showing the smallest stripe of its color between the breast of the coat, and the snowy linen, on which was gathered in full plaits, a ruffle of such exceeding fineness, that when I came afterwards to see it more closely, I wondered how it had ever been spun and woven.

I did not take in all these details in the time that he was reaching the door. They were before me long enough afterwards to permit me to become fully acquainted with them. A cloak of black cloth, with rich velvet facings, and ample collar sweeping over the shoulders, depended to the knee and completed the most elegant costume I had ever seen upon a man.

The face of this person disturbed me from the first glance. It was remarkable, and I should have liked looking at it, but every time I did so, I found the eyes, which were deep blue, and clear and keen as an eagle's, looking at me so piercingly that I could not meet them for a single instant. It confused me, and as he came closer, a sort of vague, shadowy likeness of him began to take shape in my memory. I looked at the neighbor for explation, and his smile of delight, directed also to me, confused me still more. What had I to do with them, that they looked so at me? The tall man stopped at the door, from which I had stepped aside, without speaking, to permit them to pass in; and when I lifted my eyes to his face, it was deeply flushed, and his own were glistening with tears.

"It is my father!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, Eliza," he said, tears falling as he stooped to kiss me. "I thought you were not going to know me."

"I should if I had come into the house and looked at you," I said, feeling glad and proud in his presence. I took him into the house where aunt was sitting, and exclaimed exultingly, "Aunt, here is my father come to see me."

How instantly and darkly her face colored. It seemed to swell out, as she gazed at him a moment, without being able to speak. At length she said, rising and stepping forward, "How does thee do, friend Woodson?" He returned her salutation with such courtly ease and grace, that while I looked on, I did not wonder so much at Mary's having forgiven him all. I was already half won over. He threw his cloak upon a chair, and removed his hat. If I had first seen him thus, I should have recognized him instantly, for at once there rushed over my heart the old childish delight and pride I used to feel, when, on military days, he was dressed in the trappings of his rank, and rode away on a magnificent horse—the horse and rider both figures which every eye would turn to look upon. In my memory, the portrait of those days was daguerreotyped instantly and perfectly by the presence of the original.

I think my father was a model of physical beauty. He impressed me as very tall (I think he must have exceeded six feet), and so admirably made, that I remember distinctly the greater pleasure it gave me to see him standing, that I might the more perfectly take in the elegant outlines of his figure—the well-spread shoulders, square enough to give an idea of strength, but without ruggedness—the curved lines falling from them towards the hips, and the well-formed limbs, straight and full, and expressing strength, freedom, and grace in every motion. His forehead was high, and completed the severe oval of his countenance. It was white and smooth as marble, and surrounded by redundant masses of wavy, dark, chestnut hair, glossy and fine, which he occasionally adjusted, with a hand scrupulously clean and white. When I first noticed it, I involuntarily hid my own little, black, thin paws beneath my ragged apron. His teeth were as perfect as nature (or art, to which she seems in these days to be second) ever made, and they were concealed, when his face was in repose, by lips that just closed upon them in a peculiar way, as if at every moment they would part; not that they were short, but quick and mobile—light, living lips, that I looked at a great deal, because I could not help it. Every other feature of his face was entirely satisfactory to me, altogether beautiful indeed; but the mouth lacked something which I could not find in any expression of it, either in motion or at rest. Gradually, as I studied it, I came to compare it with another, which had not pleased me at first, but which grew, to represent perfect beauty to my mind. It differed from that, in all wherein that was most beautiful. I could see that the lips were too straight, and though well chiselled, their lines were not curved, so as to give the finer expressions of the generous sentiments.

But at first I did not allow myself any lasting dissatisfaction with them. All else was so complete, that I was not disposed to be over-nice in judging this simple defect. I had a natural eye for beautiful forms, and outlines, and I had never before seen a person who gratified it so much as my father.

I was silent at first, partly from the great pleasure I had in studying these details, and partly from confusion in my thoughts, memories, and emotions. It did not yet amount to conflict. A child who loves the beautiful, will forgive a great deal in the person who possesses so much of it; and I found myself, while contemplating him, in his first few sentences with aunt, inclined to be altogether satisfied in my relation to him.

As soon as decency would permit, I was called into my own room, and my torn frock and apron taken off, to be replaced by my best clothes. I had been, unfortunately, in my very worst before. Aunt dressed me hastily, smoothed my hair, and dismissed me with a few words, the kindest she had spoken for a long time.

"Now, go out, and don't act so as to make thy father think thee is growing up a little savage." His fine presence had evidently startled her, and if I did not shock him, it was not because any training or painstaking of hers saved me from it.

When I returned, he seemed pleased with the change in my appearance, and calling me to him, placed me between his knees, and said, "Do you always wear such dreadful frocks as you had on before, Eliza?"

"No, that is the worst one I have. I hardly ever put it on."

"I am very glad to hear it," he said; "I don't know what your sisters would say to see you so ragged."

Now I began to have a curious feeling, which can only be understood by remembering, that I was always clear in the conviction that, at the very worst, I could not go home to him. Henry had not encouraged my doing so, after I had told him all, nor had he ever attempted to overcome my repugnance to the association which such a return would necessitate. I felt, therefore, quite clear that I was right in it, and I became rock about it, when he spoke of *the woman* as my mother. I hardly knew what to say. I wished not to be rude, but my spirit was so strong and self-reliant, that I could not suffer myself to be

supposed to assent to this. I therefore heard all that he said, after the reference to her, in silence, and waited when he had closed, for a full minute, at least. Then I said, looking full in his eyes, which were regarding me very kindly, "Please don't call her my mother."

"Why not?" he asked, flushing slightly.

"Because my mother—is dead," I said, after a pause, which I came very near filling up with the words, "was a good woman."

"Well, but you know, Eliza, children have two or three mothers, sometimes."

"They are not mothers, though, if they don't love them."

"But she does love you, my dear Eliza, better, she says, than any of the others. She always did when you were at home."

"But, father, I don't love her."

"You don't know her," he persisted.

"She made my mother unhappy, and I don't want to know her. Please let us talk of somebody else," I said, for I felt a painful delicacy on this subject, and his urging it, made me aware of a slight change in my feelings towards him. I talked fast, that I might not feel it; of my brothers and sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins; of the old home, which I perfectly remembered, and the playfellows I had had in it. I was more a child again than I had been since I left it.

My mother came back to me; the tender, saddened, care-worn face, with a lofty, yet subdued earnestness in its dark look, such as I remembered having had once before me when she ministered to my wants, before she laid down to die. It was on a summer evening of my third year. I had returned from school, and taken some playmates with me, for a game of hide-and-seek, in the corn that grew in the garden. Before we went to play, we sat down in a row upon the clean kitchen floor, and my mother stood at the table before us, and cut bread and butter for us. I could remember but one other act of her life; that was walking to Friends' meeting with me, one still, bright Sabbath morning in the same

summer. But the walk had not left her portrait so vividly on my memory, as the former occasion had. Then, the setting sun had shone through the opposite window, and, falling on the white wall near her, the strong light impressed her whole figure and face upon me, so that they have never been forgotten—an unfading, imperishable daguerreotype. As I stood now near my father, her tender looks, and gentle words and tones came back to me so clearly, that I seemed to be seeing and hearing them again in reality, not in fancy.

Then came the death-bed that was so terrible to me, because, while I was cruelly lifted in somebody's arms, to take a last look at her breathing, she lay before me so unnatural, so fearfully changed, that I was glad when they set me down, and I was able to run out of the crowded room, where it seemed to me that I should die myself. As I thought of this, I said to my father: "I remember you sitting by the head of the bed when my mother lay dying. Do you remember it too?"

"Certainly, child," he replied, "you were all there. I should not be likely to forget it," he added, after a few moments' silence; "but I would rather not talk of it, Eliza; it is painful to me to recall it." Then we spoke again of things more general.

I was not called upon to do anything, for already he had said that his visit must be very short, and I was given up to him. He asked about my reading and studies, and I told him many things that seemed quite to astonish and please him. I talked more than was natural to me, in this broken way, partly because I felt the time was short, and he would be a long way off very soon, and partly—and this was the more urgent and painful motive—because I was afraid to let myself be silent. I dreaded to think, in his presence, of all I had thought of in his absence. His handsome person and winning grace, made the thought of imputing evil to him, seem cruel, and I determined to resist it to the utmost.

Dinner was preparing, and I laid the table, moving with a

quick step, that was not so much an indication of my happiness as of the state of my excited nerves. When it was over, he asked me to show him the orchard, and while we were walking in it, questioned me closely respecting the treatment I experienced from aunt. I was never so much at a loss what I ought to say. I wished to tell the full truth, but I feared that if I did I should be taken immediately home with him. I was obliged, therefore, to conceal all the worst, and leave him to suppose that there was little to be complained of, but ragged clothes, and sometimes hard scolding. And I did not tell him that the little I had learned, that he was so much pleased to hear of, I had gathered in spite of her.

As I talked in this way, and felt myself virtually lying, I could not altogether close my heart against the painful feelings that arose in it, when I considered the cause of my constraint, and its cruel character. Of all that I desired on earth, there was nothing that could give me so much joy as to know that I could go home and go to school, as he said my sisters were doing. To leave this place, so detested both for what it was and for what it was not, and never could become ; to get among those whom I could love and be loved by ; and, above all, to get to studying. Oh ! the possibility of such an event was intoxicating. And yet, while my veins tingled with the thought that I could go, if I would say I wished to, I deliberately, word by word, put it beyond my reach. For when my father asked me, if uncle and aunt talked of sending me to school, I said : " Oh, yes ; uncle told me, the last time he spoke to me about it, not to be afraid, for I should certainly go by and by."

" I wish he was home," said my father, " I should like to talk with him myself ; because, if I were not satisfied that he would do it, I should take you with me now."

It is impossible for any soul, who has not been similarly tried in those years, when the present is so much to us—when we demand that whatever good is to come, shall come now, or not long hence, to understand the mighty effort with which I said :

"Uncle is very good. He is a great deal better than aunt, and he will do everything he says he will, if he can."

"Does she see the letters you write us?"

"Yes."

"Then you cannot write anything that does not please her? When I get home how shall I know but you wish to come, or that you are not very unhappy, for though you wish now to remain, which I cannot understand, I think that when I am gone you may perhaps feel very differently."

He was diminishing at every word the ground that, with the barest regard to truth, I could occupy; and the narrower it grew, the more I felt that I must remain, for I began to have a sort of shuddering dread of that which drove me to refuse what I desired almost as much as life itself—which compelled me to a kind of meanness only less in degree, than open falsehood, and which constrained me to impose on myself the bitter lot from which any friendly hand of man or woman, who would receive and care for me, could have won me. I walked in silence, thinking of these things, after his last words. Ah! what a difference between him and that other by whose side I had walked, whose soul had overflowed my young life with light, and hope, and courage; had taught me reverence and love for man, because he was a man himself, and worthy of both.

At last he spoke again: "I am afraid, Eliza, you are growing a strange little thing, in this place, away from children, living alone with these old people. You don't talk to me as Mary would, if I went to visit her."

"Mary is older than I am," I said; "and she ought to talk more. She knows more to say."

"Little children don't wait to know much, before they talk to those they love and are glad to see."

"I talk more sometimes," I replied, "but not always, to people I love. I don't love many."

"Who are they?" he asked.

"Oh! Mr. Radford and his wife; and I did love Mrs. Peterson, but she is dead."

"Have you no playmates?"

"I see the Edwards girls once in a while."

"You talk like an old woman," he said, impatiently, but very kindly, as if he were more tried with the fact, than with me.

The self-control, which I had been making a great effort to sustain in this bitter trial, was very near failing me here. I would not shed a tear, if they could be kept back; and when we came to different trees, where now and then an apple could be seen hanging, I climbed into it, if it were low; or if high, fetched the pole which they used in gathering them, to knock it down. In these ways, I had two or three times dissipated the gathering emotions which threatened me; and I longed for him to turn towards the house, for the presence of others would relieve me.

The visit and the walk were much more painful than they would have been before I knew Henry, for I continually referred in my mind to him, and, as well by comparison of the two persons, as by remembering that he had never even faintly discouraged my determination not to go to my father, felt that I must not suffer myself to fail in my purpose.

At length, to my great relief, it was said, "Shall we go back to the house now?" and my willing feet turned quickly—so quickly that my father, who had studied human emotions too long and keenly, to be easily baffled by a child, said instantly, "Why, Eliza, you start as if you would be glad not to be with me any longer. Are you afraid of me?"

It was so near a reading of my inmost thought—for I could not then discriminate between my growing moral repugnance (which seemed, at least, to amount to a dread of him) and fear—that I lifted my eyes to his face. If he understood me, pain and anguish would be written there; but there was only a puzzled, curious, almost an amused expression, as if he could not

make me out, and was as much inclined to laugh as wonder at me.

"Is my little daughter afraid of me?" he repeated.

"Oh, no!" I replied; "I should never think of being afraid of anybody so kind and handsome as you are; but"——

"Well, but—what does the but mean?"

It was extremely difficult for me to answer. I was violating my innate love of truth, in every look and tone that indicated confidence. I trembled with the internal conflicts of my emotions and thoughts, and could not see how, without open falsehood, I could longer keep my position. I felt disposed to say something that would disclose—not harshly—my feelings towards him, and my doubts; and, after a moment's balancing in my mind, I answered: "It only means that you seem almost a stranger to me, it's so long since I saw you; and I didn't remember you, father, as I did my mother. I don't remember anything you ever did to me, when I was living at home, but whipping me once, because I was afraid to go into the little barn when your black horse was in it, and giving me two shillings for 'learning by heart' a poem out of the English Reader, one morning before breakfast."

"Is that all you remember of me?" he asked. "I thought you remembered everything."

"So I do," I said, quickly; "and I think if you had ever"——

"Well, ever what, Eliza?"

"Done anything else," I concluded, very slowly, for I saw now what I was coming to, "I shouldn't have forgotten it."

"My dear child!" he said, standing still at once, and with a slight pressure on my shoulder, moving me a step backward, that we might the more easily see each other's face; "my dear child, do you think so poorly of me as that? It is not a good heart that forgets kindness, Eliza."

"But, father, I never, never do forget it—I remember so many people who have been kind to me."

Tears flowed at this injustice, which I felt the more keenly because gratitude was the source of my pleasantest and most loving recollections of persons. Henry had talked to me about gratitude and ingratitude ; and I understood very well, therefore, that to be ungrateful, was to be unworthy the love of good persons ; and my own warm emotions towards those who had ever been kind to me, made me feel more keenly, than any instruction could have, the pain of being supposed ungrateful. I had said what was perfectly true in explaining why I was not free and affectionate with my father. It was only a part of the truth, certainly, but it was that ; and now I felt myself in a still more difficult position than before I said it. He looked at me as I stood, weeping, and, after a moment's silence, said : "Well, Eliza, I am sorry you remember so little of your father."

"Oh ! I recollect a great deal about yon," I replied ; "I recollect your going away and coming back very often ; and your dressing in blue and red clothes, with a sword on, and a cap with a white feather in it ; and I remember hearing you talk to people, and seeing you do a great many things, but not to me ; and so that was the reason why I said I did not feel so well acquainted with you, as I should with my mother, if she came back to see me ; or with grandmother, who was always so very good to us."

"You are a strange little girl, Eliza," he said; "and I believe I had better leave you where you are. If you think so little of your father, and those you ought to love, you had better not be with them."

This was terrible. There was no feeling in my heart but love and tenderness towards one of them all, but himself and "that woman" whom he had called my mother. But it would not do to say so ; so I walked in silence the rest of the way, my pouring, bitter tears concealed by the bonnet that covered my face.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Thy path is not as mine;—where thou art blest,
My spirit would but wither."

As we drew near the door, I loosed the hold I had kept of his hand, and went around through the yard, and down to the spring, where I bathed my face, and endeavored to banish all traces of my distress. And when I walked up and entered the back door, the cheerful appearance of the room, which aunt had busied herself to make as pleasant and inviting as possible, helped my purpose greatly. With all my depth of emotion, and capacity of suffering, I had, happily, much of the child's readiness to be impressed or pleased with newness, or change in the externals of my life; and when I found the clean washed floors—so much whiter than I could make them—the table spread with a fine damask cloth, which only saw the light on two or three other occasions while I was in the family; the large tea-tray, laid with a fine napkin, on which was spread the small china tea-set, that had a very fine vine of the most delicate wood color for its only ornament; the silver spoons and the ivory handled knives, brightened as I had never been able to do them;—the whole effect was so cheerful, that my spirits rose at once. And I was the more pleased because I wished that the home I chose to remain in, should seem pleasant and attractive to him.

When I entered, they were speaking of the orchard and fruit, and some new grafts that uncle had had set the year before. I busied myself in whatever I saw, that I could do, till he was invited to the table. The supper was, indeed, very nice and plentiful, but it was one of my peculiarities to be quite indifferent to my food. There were a few things which I never willingly tasted; but I was little more tempted by delicacies than by our

common fare, which was always palatable and wholesome. The supper interested me, therefore, less than the style of it.

My father served the broiled chicken, with such determined deference to aunt's choice of parts, and such delicacy of proceeding, altogether, as would have amused me at any other time, by contrast with our common off-hand ways in such matters. But I was not amused now. Their conversation and movements floated upon, rather than impressed my mind, till, when the slow, long meal was nearly over, as I thought, my father, looking at me, asked aunt if his little girl was always so still.

"No, indeed," was the reply, in a good-natured tone. "She sometimes is as much too talkative as she is now too still;" and, looking at me, she said, "Why doesn't thee talk to thy father, Eliza, as thee does often to other people?"

"I have talked a great deal to him, when we were out walking."

"That was right," she said, encouragingly. "Thee's a chattering little thing enough, generally. Thee oughtn't to make thy father think thee's kept a dummy."

I did not like the tone of this remark. I was so used to her, that I felt when her pleasantest words and looks concealed a disagreeable meaning, which I was sure they did now; and my perplexity was returning, when my father said, "I am glad to hear from Eliza, ma'am, that she likes yourself and her uncle well enough to wish to remain with you, in preference to going home with me."

She looked at me, on hearing this, with an expression I shall never forget. I think it, for the first time, suggested to her that there was a concealed purpose in my quiet, insignificant life. There was one piercing flash of her bluish-grey eyes, that seemed to say, "What can she mean?" But all her mental operations were as rapid as her temper, and she instantly replied, with great sweetness, to him, "I am very glad thee finds her so well contented. I suppose thee has enough to do to take care of the others."

"Yes," he said. "I have no wish to take her away, since I find her so happy here, but I shall wish her to go to school, by and by. My other girls are both at school, and their brothers also."

"Oh, we intend to send Eliza, after a while. She is learning very well here now; and while I can teach her, I'd rather keep her at home, than send her to the common schools about us."

Never had I felt such towering rage, as at these words, the glaring falsehood of which, my cruel position with regard to my father, enabled her to utter before my face! I looked at one and then at the other, and rose from the table. She relied on my having concealed all from him, and went on, while I stood at the window, looking over the desolate landscape, under the grey light of the autumn evening, to enlarge upon her doings in the past, and her purposes for the future, quite as unscrupulously as those words had been spoken.

My father received her professions with the utmost suavity, and apparent confidence in them. He said smooth and polite things in return; and they grew very pleasant together. She spoke as she was but little used to speaking to me, and asked me to clear and lay the table for the men, who would soon be in; and I did so, glad of something to do for the time. But I had detected that in her face and tones that troubled me. Glancing at the future, I was like one who stands upon the sea-shore, under a cloudy sky—the near waters are bathed in sunshine, while afar off they heave and toss, in black and frowning agitation. I foresaw this cloudy sky and shadowed water. I felt that she would understand, and might use, the power I had given her, in making this choice to be silent, when I had so much to complain of. It filled me with that old chilling dismay I had so often experienced; and, as I stood upon the bank of the creek, alone and silent, just as the great, dull, round moon came struggling through the tree-tops, where Henry and I had watched it one night, when it was just as big and round, but much brighter than this evening, I thought, the stream is in deep

shadow now; but he said it would reach the light, by and by.

And then I was, for the first time that I can recollect, clearly conscious of what I have often, alas! very often, experienced since—what every earnest, resolute soul must, who sees the battle of life before it, and knows that endurance is, for the time, its only weapon. I settled back, as it were, into my own strength; and a thrill of pleasure that was almost pain, ran along the currents of my life at the thought, *I can bear all.* I did not reason to the ultimate of escape, or release, in any manner. *I knew it was right, and I felt I could do it.* In that was my triumph.

Around this thought—which was, for the time, as a keen, flashing blade in the hand of my spirit, wherewith I could have cleft my way through any obstacles—gathered soon, in bright array, a host of lesser consolations and aids: holy remembrances of the past; the sanctified and sustaining affection of the dead; anticipated joys with the living; the triumphs of the time to come, when I should be able to free my mind to its chosen pleasures. This last, always the highest and strongest purpose I could know. It was as if, having raised the standard of victory in my own heart, friendly and helpful powers came to cheer me by their presence, and suggestive hopefulness. I went in, at length, feeling queen of my own being. The little conflicts, the petty distractions of the day, were gone. I sat down and talked with my father, and with aunt; and when it was time to retire, I was directed to light him to my bed, which she had prepared for him. "And thee can sleep with me," she added. This was a deadly thrust at my internal tranquillity, but I bore it famously. I felt the color leave my face with the quickness of lightning; but I turned it from them, as he was bidding her good night, and walked slowly towards the door of my room. We entered. The bed was dressed in the elegant white needlework quilt which always lay folded in a large trunk, and was as rarely displayed as the tablecloth. The pillows were

in fine, snowy linen cases ; and the room, unfinished and rude as it was, had a tidy, cheerful look, very different to the dismal one it usually wore to me. I placed the candle on the table, and, as I turned to say "good night," I extended my hand, and raised my face for a kiss.

"Eliza," said my father, "will you not come here and sleep in this bed? I am going away from you in the morning, and perhaps I may never see you again. You used to sleep with me sometimes, when you were not much smaller than you are now, for you haven't grown much in these five years," he added, looking thoughtfully and sadly down upon me. "Do you know how old you are?"

"I shall be eleven," I replied, "next week, on Friday. I looked it out in the almanac, yesterday." Something in my father's memory, as he looked thus upon my raised face, caused several large, silent tears to fall from his eyes. His countenance was unmoved, and he did not speak, but they fell, drop by drop, heavily and slowly; one upon my hand as it rested in his. This was worse to me than all my own pain. This large, strong, placid, handsome man—it must hurt him more, to weep, than a child like me, and I longed to fold my arms about his neck, and say something to take away the pain I had given him.

"You are very much like your mother, Eliza," he said, at last, in a low, husky voice; "you look so much older than you are, that you make me think of her when she was a young girl, as she was when I first knew her."

How my heart beat with the hope that he would go on to speak of her; but he did not. I waited in silence till his tears ceased, and then I asked timidly, "Was my mother as homely as I am, father?" He smiled a faint, painful sort of smile, that flickered over his features, without lighting them, as winter sunshine falls upon an icy rock, but does not warm it ; or as heat lightning plays over the surface of a cloud, but does not penetrate it.

"As homely as you are, dear Eliza? Who told you you were homely?"

"Oh, everybody says so, and I know it myself. I look a little better now," I said, "than I used to, because I haven't grown quite so dark since I sprained my ankle, and had to stay in the house so long." He didn't answer my question, and I was anxious to have an answer; so, after waiting a little, I repeated it as delicately as possible.

"Your mother, Eliza," he replied, "was dark like you—not so dark as you are now—and you are very much like her; but I did not think her homely."

"One more question." I felt nervous and fearful, as if I had taken a razor in my unskillful hand to shave his throat, "but I must ask it. She was very good, was she not, father?"

His blue eyes opened full upon me, with a look of pain, as if I had wounded him, but he remained silent.

"I asked," I said, when I was no longer able to bear the look and the silence, "because nobody here can tell me anything about her; and—and she was my mother—and I want to know."

He replied with a slowness that was agonizing to me, as it proved the pain with which he spoke. "Yes, Eliza, your mother was one of the noblest and best women that God ever made."

"That is enough, father," I said, not willing to take another of those costly words from him, precious as they were to me. "That is enough. I hope you will not be displeased with me for asking you. I wished to know so very much, and I would rather have had you tell me than everybody else. Good night, dear father; I will be up very early in the morning, to see you."

He had seated himself upon a chair while we were talking and I put my arms about his neck and kissed him with real affection. In that moment I had forgiven him everything. His acknowledgment of my mother's worth, and a dim sense I had that

he was suffering from the memory of pain he had inflicted on her, touched my deepest tenderness and compassion.

If I could have been assured that the woman at home had died at that moment, I should have clung to him and whispered all my trials and sorrows in his ear and begged to go with him. But now it would not do, and I left him to go to a room, the very air of which was made offensive to me with an unconquerable loathing.

I had stayed so long that she was asleep. I undressed myself at the foot of the bed, and crawled stealthily up on the extreme border from her. It was so large that after I had covered myself, I reached my hand cautiously out, and to my great relief, found that I could not touch her. It was late before I slept, but I resolutely withheld myself from reviewing all the cruelty of my position. Nature had given me an extraordinary power of reserving my strongest feelings from outward expression, while it was necessary to do so, and I felt that while my father remained with me, I *must* not disclose, by signs or speech, the distress I experienced in staying where I was. I was glad he had so spoken of my mother. It lifted an oppressive burden from my spirit—it softened me towards him; it enabled me to forgive, and to feel an affection for him which cost me no self-reproach. It removed my pain in thinking on my sister's great love for him. Altogether his words, and those great, slow-dropping tears, had comforted and strengthened me, so that I felt much less keenly than I should have, otherwise, the hardness of my lot.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"There's not a chord in all thy being can
Respond to mine. Try not the search."

My grief at the parting next morning, was profound. It partook of self-reproach for not having trusted my father; for having thought ill, of so noble and kind a parent as he seemed to me, when I had watched him out of sight; and of deep discouragement that spread itself over my whole future. I had rejected the only chance of escape visible from that point, and where, I asked myself, would the next come from, and when? I wondered at my own persistency, not without a certain approval of it, when I thought of *the woman*, but still I did wonder, recalling his grace and elegance, his patient kindness with what I felt to have been almost rudeness in me, and with my innumerable defects, which I constantly magnified by comparing them with his perfections—I did wonder that I had not softened and asked him to take me with him. If he had by any accident returned to the house, I fear I should have repented my decision, and gone at the first offer. I looked up the road two or three times during the first weary hour, half expecting, half hoping to see the wagon returning. It seemed almost like the change death can make, that he should have been with me at breakfast, and now be gone altogether beyond recall.

I did not weep as I should have wept had my feeling been one of simple grief at parting with him, but I suffered far more. This was not at all understood, and because my tears soon ceased to flow, and I addressed myself unbidden to my tasks, as a refuge from the war in my soul, aunt said: "Thy father needn't shed any tears for thy grief, I am sure. I think thee cares as little for him as any child could."

"No, I love him very much," I said.

"Well, then, I can't make out why thee should say thee didn't want to go home with him. Thee has always seemed so —so discontented, that I expected when he came thy first word would be to ask him to take thee back with him."

"I could love him and yet not wish to go home with him. Could I not?" I asked.

"Children don't generally love people in that way," she said.

It vexed and wearied me to talk with her when I was troubled, because I felt neither heart nor help in her, or her words, and I answered, perhaps a little petulantly: "Well, aunt, I almost think I am not a child at all."

"Thee's not far wrong in that, I guess, for I never did know another child that would have done what thee has. It fairly beats me to understand thee. Why didn't thee want to go home with thy father?"

I could not tell the truth, and I would not tell a lie; so I remained silent till she repeated the question more sharply.

Then I said: "Because I had rather stay here."

She looked upon me with a baffled, angry look, that seemed to threaten me for sauciness, and I felt myself so much more in her power than I had before, that I was more solicitous to appease her wrath, so I added, after a moment: "I would rather stay here, aunt, because if my sisters are at school, maybe I should have to be home alone with—with that woman who is my father's wife, and I am afraid I might not like her."

"Does thee know her?"

"I remember her a very little; but, aunt, I don't like to speak of her."

I remained silent and she said no more for some time, but occasionally, when I turned my eyes to her face, I found her studying me, with a look so keen, and curious, and dissatisfied, yet exulting, that it made me uneasy, and I got away from it as soon as I found an excuse for leaving the room. She did not

refer to it again until uncle's return, when she related the circumstance of the visit to him, and my refusing to go home with my father. Uncle seemed grateful and pleased, and commended me in her presence as a good girl not to wish to go away from them; and then she said, in a tone of attempted pleasantry, very rarely used in referring to or addressing me: "So I suppose there is no prospect of our getting rid of her very soon?"

There was no allusion to the school question, and these last words dismissed the subject apparently from the thoughts as well as the tongues of my adopted parents.

I heard no more of my father. I could not speak of him, because she only had seen him, and in a few weeks his visit seemed like a dream in my existence. It was unsubstantial compared with the events that had preceded it, and I seemed to have derived but two sources of lasting satisfaction from it—the one the reconciliation to my father, on behalf of my mother's memory; the other, the self-approval flowing from the firmness I had exercised in self-denial.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"The soul lies voiceless."

Thus the winter came on, and wore away its weary dullness, unbroken by any event that could interest me, after the stirring experience of the past year. There were times when it seemed as if all the action of my life were past, and I was doomed henceforth to perpetual stagnation. I had read again and again all the books within my reach. I had exhausted all the personal resources that were accessible. I had no longer the simple child-heart that, when denied entertainment or life in one direction, seeks them as readily in another; and thus I began to

realize what I had not yet suffered, a lack of interest in everything that surrounded me.

The phenomena of nature no longer caused me wonder or delight. The spring freshet, the migration of wild fowl, the vernal growth of buds and leaves, the nest-building in the maple and cherry-trees, were not what they had been in former days. I had reached one of those periods when the spirit seems to lie bound, and still, because no external challenge comes to it. I could not take a single step towards my own progress, and it required sometimes deep search into my inner life to prove that any purpose of self-emancipation and culture still existed there. I was unable to follow Henry's advice in studying of arithmetic, for Albert did not come to us that winter. It was a season of painful memories—of half-sullen brooding and resolving.

Towards the spring came a letter with a black seal, which informed me of my father's death. It seems strange now, how little it affected me, for I had a wholly kind feeling towards him after that conversation in my room, but I believe that when I parted with him next morning, I gave him up altogether, feeling that we were separated beyond the possibility of helping or comforting each other. I do not recollect ever thinking of him afterwards as one to whom I could look for aid, and that was what I now demanded more than love. My nature was too persistent, and my sacred recollections yet too dearly cherished, to permit any life to become large or strong to me which could give me only love. Thus, while I thought often of my father, and dwelt upon his last words and looks, I mourned but little and without bitterness for him. His death neither aided nor hindered me, that I could then see.

In the blooming weeks of the spring-time two events occurred that helped to break up the external monotony, and lift me a little out of the apathy in which I was sunk. There came into the neighborhood two English families, veritable weavers of the better sort. One consisted of a young man, his wife, and one child. I saw but little of them, but the other family numbered

nine souls, and lived in the very next house to us for several months. The wife was a lace-maker, and, as well as I can judge, she must have been a very fair specimen of her class. When I had a little leisure, I used to sit by her, while she held a pillow, on her knees and twisted her bobbins through and through, and in and out, among each other, in a manner so incomprehensible to me that I never attempted to follow them, or to get the faintest idea of the work in which she felt the pride and satisfaction of an artist. She was very communicative, and from her I learned a great deal in confirmation of what Mr. Fleming had told me, as well as of the other side of the picture, for she loved "old Hingland," she said, "and always would let what would 'appen." The clothing of this family excited my wonder, it was so heavy, so substantial, and strongly made. It seemed designed never to wear out. It had such extraordinary seams, such astonishing borders, stoutly stitched upon capes to be worn upon the shoulders, where no possible strain could come; such huge pockets, made strong like our grain sacks; such utter abandonment, throughout, of the beautiful to the durable, that I was sometimes scarcely able to conceal how much I was amused at it all. When I spoke to Mrs. Murray about it she told me, very gravely, that "the Hamericans didn't know 'ow to 'ave hany think at all."

Her husband was a large, dark-looking man, whom I always avoided instinctively; but he was very laborious, and the next year he took his family to a little cabin of his own, which he had built upon a small lot of land, which Mrs. Murray informed me, with great delight, was "hall paid for but fifty dollars."

This family was a considerable resource to me while it remained near us, but my listless, apathetic state must have been quite manifest to them; for I remember Mrs. Murray telling me, several times, that I was "more like a hold woman who 'ad cares, than a young girl, who hought to be gay as a lark."

CHAPTER XXX.

"We live together, years and years,
And leave unsounded still
Each other's springs of hopes and fears,
Each other's depth of will."

One evening, when uncle came into the house, he said, with an excited look and voice, that he was afraid something had happened to Squire Edwards.

"How?" asked aunt.

"Why, he went, more than a week ago, to Wellsville," was the reply, "and was to have been home the third or fourth day; but he hasn't come yet."

"Oh, if that's all, he's very comfortable somewhere, I'll be bound," was her contemptuous remark.

"But that is not all," said uncle. "His wife got his brother William to go, day before yesterday, to look for him; and he has just come back, and says that he left Wellsville, the third day, for home, and he can hear nothing of him on the way."

"What do they think?" asked aunt, a little more respectfully than she had spoken before.

"They are afraid of foul play on the road; for he had several hundred dollars with him. We are going to turn out and search; and I think you had better go down and see his wife. William says she is dreadfully alarmed, and he is afraid to have her left alone. He has gone to fetch his mother and wife down, but they won't get here till late in the evening."

This occurrence quite aroused my torpid feelings. I pitied Mrs. Edwards intensely; and I thought at once, "I hope she has plenty of tea;" for that seemed to me, after what Marcia

had long ago told me, a specific for all her trials. Aunt had been less grim and repulsive for a few days, just at that time; and, as she was preparing to go, and I brought her Quaker bonnet, (the second best) and shawl, she astonished me by asking if I would like to go along. I had no wish to. I was so entirely separated from the young people by the last year, that I felt unable to approach them, and their mother I never talked with. I only pitied, but felt no power to help her. All I could do was, to wish that she might be comforted; and I asked aunt if she would not like to take her a little tea, for fear she might not have any; and when she said, "Yes, that's well thought of," I felt pleased with the approval, and put two handfuls, the largest I could grasp, into a bit of clean cloth, and gave it her. She did not return that night, and we understood from this that Mrs. Edwards must require attention. Uncle said that men were out searching, and he had let two horses go, but was not going himself till morning.

He and I sat by the low, smouldering fire alone, the evenings being yet a little chilly. I was sewing—hemming some fine linen shirts which aunt was making for a brother of hers, who was expected soon to visit them. She had not seen him since she returned to her home, when I came with her; but letters were constantly exchanged between them, and nearly every month brought from him a bundle of atheistic tracts, journals, and pamphlets, which, of late, I had been reading—at first, for want of something more acceptable, and, at last, from interest in their contents. They did not make me happy or more loving, but they stimulated my thought a little, and that was better than the long slumber I should have suffered without them.

As I sat sewing, we talked, and uncle asked me if I did not wish to go with aunt to see the girls.

I answered, "No."

"Why, how is that, Eliza?"

It was difficult for me to explain how it was. "I am very sorry for them," I said, "if they have lost their father; but—

but I am afraid I couldn't talk with them much, if I had gone, and then it would do no good."

There was a silence of some minutes, and then uncle said, taking his pipe from his lips, "Eliza, you have never seemed to me to grieve about your father's death; and now that we are alone, I should like you to tell me about it."

"About what, uncle?"

"Why you have been so indifferent to it. Did you not love your father as well as you did Mr. Cranstoun, for whom you grieved so much?"

"I loved my father, uncle; but when I heard of his death, I felt so discouraged about myself, that I did not think of it as I should if I had been happier."

"Discouraged about yourself, child!" he repeated, in astonishment. "What in the world does that mean?"

"About my learning anything, uncle, or getting to school. I am in my twelfth year, and I don't seem any nearer to it now, than I was two years ago, and that makes me feel very sad and careless about everything."

As a very great treat—something that would have quite turned my head in any comfortable mood—uncle had presented me with a dress, when he came home from the last little journey—a black silk one. I had been very grateful, more because I knew he intended it as a great pleasure, than because it really was. And it came into my mind, at once, that this sort of complaint was not an acknowledgment of his kindness; but I could not help it, and so I added, after a moment, "I would rather go to school, uncle, than have my room full of silk frocks." My very soul spoke in my eyes, as I said it, looking into his.

"Well, child, you shall! you shall! I always meant to have you go, but, somehow or other, aunt isn't yet ready; and if you were as much of a child as most girls of your age are, there would be time enough yet. But I see you are growing old fast. But tell me now, Eliza, why, as you are so very anxious about this, you let your father go home without you?"

"Uncle," I said, very decidedly, "I would tell you if I would any one, but I never shall. And, please, don't let aunt know that I said so; for then she might try to make me tell, and I wish nobody to know it but myself."

Uncle was silent, and he looked perplexed, but not displeased. At length he said, very quietly, "Would you not have told Mr. Cranstoun, if he had lived and seen your father?"

"I did tell him, and he thought it was quite right."

"But, my dear child, Mr. Cranstoun was dead before your father came here."

How well I knew that, and I said with swelling heart, "I know he was, uncle, but I told him."

"Did you expect your father, then?"

"No."

"How came you to be talking to him about it?"

If it had been aunt questioning me thus, I should have been alarmed; but he was so reasonable and kind that I was not at all frightened, and I answered, "I was telling him how very much I wished to get to school, and then he asked me about my relations and friends." Uncle seemed troubled by what I said, and I thought, "I shall never have a better chance; I may as well tell him now, all I mean." I turned it over hastily in my mind, and at length said quietly, but very firmly, "Uncle, I am determined to go to school—sometime. I know," I added, "that you mean me to, but I believe aunt doesn't; and when I get a little older, I shall go myself. I can work a part of the time for somebody who will teach me and give me clothes."

"Eliza," he said, with suffused eyes, "you shall go if I live; but don't talk in that way, child; a little girl ought not to say what she is determined to do. It sounds too much like a woman."

I was about to reply when we heard a hurried step at the door, and uncle walked hastily to it. There was news that a party of four men who had ridden rapidly out on the road Mr. Edwards was expected to come by, had found, as they thought, some tidings or trace of him, and one of them had returned to

question his wife, and wished to see uncle as soon as he could go down. I immediately went to bed, fastening myself into my room, and when I rose next morning, early as it was, I found the house all astir with preparations to turn out in the search. The alarm or hope, whichever it was, of the previous evening, had proved groundless, and people gathered from far and near, to join the hunt. Mr. Radford was among them, and he asked aunt to let me go up and stay with Julia Anna till his return, for she did not like to be left alone with the baby. The permission was granted, for it was no time to be ungracious, or ill-humored, and I went, thankful for the escape, but not till I had heard two or three times repeated, to different persons, that Mrs. Edwards was very dangerously ill and almost frantic; and that she reproached herself for having said to him, just as he turned his horse from the gate, "Don't come back without you bring me some of the best tea in the town."

"The old story, yet," I thought; and the next time it was added, "and she had none in the house till I took her some last night."

The search was continued for five or six days, and then all hope of finding the lost man was abandoned, but the general opinion was, not that he had been murdered, as was first feared, but that he had absconded.

Mrs. Edwards looked more miserable than ever, as she gradually fell from one slender hope after another, and settled down to the conviction that she was a widow, or worse—a deserted wife. Marcia and Rosanna, whom I sometimes saw, told me of her wretchedness, and pining, and fretfulness, and I saw very clearly that their happiness was quite gone. The distillery of course was stopped. There was no more money, and the miserable family at last broke up, and scattered among the paternal relations. I did not like to pass the house and distillery afterwards. I had a troublesome fancy that I might see him suddenly appear at one of the doors, and ask me where they all were. Late in the summer, when speculation about him had

almost ceased, came a letter, or rather parcel to his wife from New Orleans. It proved to be a letter from the keeper of a hospital there, inclosed with three or four sheets in his own handwriting. The letter informed her that her husband had died in the institution a few days before it was written; and after he was told he could not live, he had requested the writer to forward these sheets to her address, and to inform her of his death. There was a curious incredulity in the minds of most people about the whole affair, at which I wondered a little, but very soon we ceased to hear of it; and Mrs. Edwards's trials and sorrows commanded no more active interest or sympathy from the people among whom she suffered.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"Came in those weary days unfolding mysteries
Of thought; with sad deliverance offered
From the barrenness that reigned. But not
Thus might the imprisoned soul escape
Its bondage."

My own condition now absorbed my entire thought. It seemed to be becoming each month more wretched. My life was a stagnant pool which no angel descended to disturb, for the healing of my soul. I was unmoved by love; indifferent to hatred or passion; my resolve slept sullenly, as it were, within me, under my outward restraints, as iron shackles when long worn, produce a callous condition of the parts first fretted and quickened by them. While I was in this state, the brother whom aunt had expected came. He was younger than herself, good-looking, very pleasant, and quick-spoken. She was more delighted to see him than I had thought possible to such a nature, and her great joy at once reminded me of Henry's words,

"She needed the love of many—brothers, sisters, and children." He had a small box of books with him, which he had brought her—infidel publications, and some others; among the rest, "The Age of Reason," "Volney's Ruins," and a translation of the "Lettres Philosophiques" of Voltaire, and numerous kindred works of less distinguished authors. I remember well, his handing me, when I sat down on the first evening, a small volume in large print, on thick paper, with the words, "There, Eliza, is a little book that I thought might amuse thee, but I expected to find thee a large girl. What has thee done to her, Phebe?" turning to his sister, "that she hasn't grown any more since I saw her?"

She made no reply, but went on turning the leaves of a book she had in her hand. I looked at the title page of mine, and found the words, "Tale of the Three Wise Men of Gotham," and for its motto:

> "Three wise of Gotham
> Went to sea in a bowl,
> If the bowl had been stronger,
> My tale had been longer."

I puzzled myself much over this, knowing it must have some meaning deeper than appeared in those silly words, but I would not ask Mr. Strong to explain it, and presently I gave it up and went to reading. I was soon pleased and amused by the sprightly dialogue, and the humor, which, though I could not guess what it was levelled at, was apparent even to me. I read the tale of the first wise man, sitting there, and of the other two before I went to sleep. But I understood only one—the burlesque of Parry's search for the North Pole. Of Phrenology and the Symmes Theory I had never heard, and could not, therefore, understand the satire that was levelled at them.

The next evening, Mr. Strong asked if I had read any part of my book.

"I have read it through," was my reply.

"Read it through!" he exclaimed; "thee reads too fast. It does thee no good to go through a book in that way. Thee knows nothing about it after thee is done."

I said, "I know all about one of the wise men's stories, but I don't understand what the other two mean."

"I knew thee couldn't understand it if thee had read it so fast."

"But, Mr. Strong," I said, "I do understand one very well—the one about Captain Parry—and I can tell nearly all there is in the others; but I don't know what the writer is making fun of."

"Well, tell me," he said. And I went on to relate the chief points, and often the exact language of the book.

He listened, apparently in great pleasure, and occasionally gave aunt an indescribable look out of his twinkling black eyes. When I had finished, he said, with a rather pompous decisiveness, "Phebe, what is this child reading?"

"Anything she can get."

"That's wrong! Such a child ought to have the right sort of books. I'll give thee some, Eliza, before I go away, and I shall wish thee to read them carefully, many times. I'll give thee one now;" and rising, he walked to a shelf by the chimney, and took thence a small volume, which he handed to me.

It was the "Age of Reason." I read it, and all the others he selected also—some of them three or four times. But I need not detail the weary stages by which I waded through this turbid stream of infidelity. The details of the books do not remain on my memory; I have never since opened them; but I well remember the painful giving up of one tender sentiment after another, to their hard, exacting, unspiritual statements and proofs. The irreverence of the "Age of Reason," which was the book I could most easily comprehend—the coarse assaults upon the character and life of Jesus, and his mother, hurt me most keenly. I recalled the beautiful Madonna, and the reverent words *he* had spoken of her, and her son; but gradually, day by day, as I

read and thought, I came to consider that even he might have been mistaken; that this whole book, which I heard praised in such unmeasured terms, must be greater proof than his words; and so to adopt in my talk, and more external mind, its language and belief. But it never thoroughly penetrated my inmost being. For there, still lay cherished, when I was most ready in the flippant coarseness of this school, deep reverence for the Power, Love and Wisdom, which Henry had shown me in so many ways; and my perception of the exceeding beauty and elevation of the character of Jesus, could have been kindled into a contrite acknowledgment, at almost any hour, by an earnest appeal from any loving spirit. I had read the Sermon on the Mount till it was unnecessary for me to go to the book for it; yet, I always did go, even in the midst of my stoutest protestations, with a religious regard for his wish. Thus there remained in me the germ of a true spiritual life, quite untouched by the virulence of these books; but it was less matured than my intellect, which demanded food, action, growth—and sought them anywhere. The young and vigorous mind, like the strong, growing plant, will urn in any direction to reach light and sustenance.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"I never did repent for doing good,
Nor shall not now."

The next year was one of great suffering. My reading, which continued the same in kind, and the thoughts which were its natural product, afforded me no consolation. There was no love about or within me; no soul came to mine; and it lay, as it were, caged in the heavy, chilling imprisonments of my unnatural position, my false theories, my hopeless future. My nature, expanding without freedom, and without true attraction, fretted and

chafed against its narrow limitations. Faith and loyalty were strong elements of my life. I demanded heroes for my worship, and if I could, I should have chosen them from among the good, as well as the intellectually great. But my knowledge, limited in all departments, was particularly so in respect to those who had loved and served humanity. I think I had never heard of such a phenomenon as a philanthropist, except in John Howard and Elizabeth Fry, whom I had read of in a Quaker journal. I had wished to be like them, but the sketches I had seen had not satisfied the demand made for the sublime in such a life.

Thus I was near completing my thirteenth year, and no way of escape was yet open to me. In my immediate personal relations there was not only no change, but no improvement. True I was not beaten as I had been when smaller (I grew more in this year, I think, than in the two preceding ones), but there was no more rational recognition of my rights. I was permitted freer use of books, but that was because the brother had requested it; and they were always such as he chose. I read newspapers and pamphlets, and became well informed on political subjects, with Mr. Clay and Mr. Webster for my leaders. But this was all so external and unsatisfying; it cherished no aspiration, it kindled no faith. I could not rise, as I had in the better days, to a clear recognition of what before me was good, and what evil. I lived in a cloud. In only one respect was I clearer or stronger than I had been—that was, in the determination to make an effort for myself before I should be fourteen. I was quite settled that I ought not to wait any longer. But how to begin?

This was the question which, after I had commenced deliberating upon it, dwelt continually in my mind. I was working very hard, for uncle had bought, late in the fall before, thirty cows; and so I had my old tasks again, with increased cares in the cheese and butter-making; and every one was a substantial hindrance to me—for how was I to get away from so much?—how could I be spared?

The summer wore away in this kind of indecision. I took no walks. I spoke freely to no one. Albert was not on the farm, and so I lost my association with that good family. Mr. Radford and his wife had their second baby, and were too much taken up at home to think of me. I had no one to look to for counsel or help, and I seemed to be waiting for them, when a young woman came to the neighborhood, on a visit to her sister —the sad, black-eyed woman, whom I have before spoken of as visiting at our house. The sister was much more of a person than herself, about twenty-five years of age, large and well made, with a dignified carriage—dark, grave, decided face, which it seemed one would rather depend on, than love. On their first visit to us, she walked with me into the little peach orchard, to gather fruit for tea ; and before I knew it, she had the secret of my discontent and cherished purposes fully laid out before her.

"How old are you ?" she asked.

"Almost thirteen."

"Thirteen ! Are you sure it isn't fourteen ?"

"Yes."

"You look much older, but that is old enough. You ought to be at school now if you are ever going. Has Mrs. Smalley no conscience I wonder ?"

Her interest and decisiveness quite roused and assured me. I had not heard such a sound in a long time. "I am *going*," I said, "*at any rate*, before I am fourteen."

"Have they promised ?"

"Oh, yes ; they are always ready to promise, but I do not mean to wait much longer for them."

"What do you think of doing then?" she asked, thoughtfully, looking down.

"I am going away."

"Where will you go to, and how will your doing that bring you to school ?"

This was rather straight forward and practical for my dream-

ings. It showed me their unsubstantial character. In truth, I suspect I was not at all practical then. It was my great defect, I think, that, while I saw before me what I ought and wished to do, I was inclined rather to dwell upon the thought of it done, or actually doing, than upon any detailed manner of accomplishing it.

Miss Miller's questions were, therefore, home-thrusts at the shadowy fabric in which I was wont to take refuge. I felt ashamed and perplexed, and at last was obliged to say, very reluctantly, "I don't know. But," I added, the next moment, with more spirit, "I am determined to go somewhere, and afterwards I'll find a way to get to school."

My new friend made many inquiries respecting my family, what I had read, what I most strongly inclined to, and so on. She had been many years a teacher, and seemed capable of a very discriminating and generous interest in young persons. She advised me to stick to my resolution, but told me, at the same time, that there was an old adage I would do well to heed: "'Look before you leap.' You want some older person than yourself, my dear, to plan for and advise you."

"Will not you?" I asked, feeling as if the Providence I had long scouted, had sent her to me, for that express purpose.

"I wouldn't a bit mind doing it," she replied; "but I might make my poor sister some trouble, for, of course, they will be very angry with any one who counsels or encourages you."

"They need not then," I said, "for I shall go all the same if nobody does it, and I should feel so much happier, and maybe, do so much better, if somebody like you would advise me."

"Well, we will see," she said.

I felt certain that Miss Miller would help me, and was quite as certain that she had a way of looking into things, and possibilities, that was almost inspiration. She did me inestimable service in that short time that we were together, by renewing my faith and hope, and enkindling my long-smothered aspirations. I felt a warmer life in my soul at once. Before they left us, I

begged so earnestly to see her soon again, that she promised, as I was never allowed to go to her sister's house, to come down in a few days. I was to let her know, if possible, when I would be alone. I waited a long time. It seemed as if the Fates kept aunt at home; but she did go to spend the day, at length, at a neighbor's, and she was only well out of sight on the old white horse, when I ran over to Mrs. Rumsey's (her husband was dead, and she was back again on the little farm), and Johnny was dispatched with my message.

Miss Miller came, attended by a sister of uncle's, a lovely woman, sensitive, tender-hearted, and religious, who had recently come to the country, and who was therefore almost a stranger to me; but, the result of the long conference was, to assure me of the earnest sympathy of these and many other good persons, and to crystallize, as it were, more finely, the crude elements of resolution and action that filled my mind. It was finally determined that I should remain as I was, till I heard from home again, as my father's death might have wrought important changes in the affairs of the family, but that whatever tidings came, I should not wait very much longer before making some demonstration in my own behalf. It seemed an easy thing to do, with such strong, soulful people to sustain me in it.

The summer was quite gone before the long-expected letter came, and then it gave me no help, except in provoking aunt openly to scout the oft-repeated and troublesome inquiry, when was I going to school?

She expressed, in some contemptuous words, as she read it, her belief that my sister was a pert, saucy girl, who had better mind her own business, and that I was much better off than any of the rest of them! She always spoke of my brothers and sisters in this way, as if they were not human individualities, but so many sheep, to be lumped together as the rest of the flock; and it chafed and stung me to hear her. She had used the same words to my father, sitting at the supper-table that night. It seemed as if their not having the benefit of her

care, raised a presumption in her mind against their worthiness.

I was not allowed to answer the letter for a long time, and when I did, she added a few lines in her own hand, not of commendation, for the quiet, laborious life I was leading with her—doing the labor of a strong woman—but of herself for what I was learning from her brother's books, for the proficiency she said I was making in writing and figures, because she had lately discovered that it would pay her to let me acquire skill enough to help uncle in his post-office business.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Fearful hearts light storms o'erwhelm,
Timid ones ne'er reach the land;
Keep thine eye undimmed by fear,
Thou shalt safe to harbor steer."

The last autumn month passed, and I had entered on my fourteenth year. Now, I thought, the time for action is coming. Before another birthday something must be done. Mr. Strong came again in the winter, but neither he nor his books were any longer new to me. The life and interest I had in other persons and things, made me comparatively indifferent to him and his triumphant arguments. I cared much more for Miss Miller's decision to spend the season with her sister, instead of returning home as had been her purpose all the autumn.

In the latter part of January came the answer to my letter, which we had waited for in the hope that it would bring me some news of an uncle, for whose interposition I had strongly hoped.

Then it was nearly a month before I could show it to my ad

viser, owing to the weather and the almost impassable winter roads of that wild country.

"I don't see that we are much wiser, Eliza, for having waited for this," she said, after reading it. "What do you learn from it?"

"Nothing about my uncle that helps me. You see, Miss Miller, I couldn't write and ask as plainly as I would have liked to, because *she* had to see the letter, and Mary doesn't think of my wanting to go home."

"Well, what do you wish to do now?"

"I don't know."

"Will you come to us? I know my sister and her husband would give you a home."

"You are all very kind," I replied, feeling the hot tears fill my eyes; "but I do not wish to stop in this country, Miss Miller. If I had money I would go home as soon as the roads are better."

Miss Miller sat a long time silent, in profound thought, as it appeared. We were in Mrs. Rumsey's house, in the very room, and by the very window where he had been sitting when I spoke to him the last time, and when he said the dreadful words I then heard him utter. Somehow or other, while I was waiting for my friend to speak, that scene came into my mind—the man's look of degradation and rage; then the deserted house, and his death soon after, and my own experience since. I was beginning to feel myself in danger of breaking down, under the review of all these painful things, when she lifted her large, dark eyes to my face, with an earnest, searching expression that arrested my thoughts at once, and brought them back to her. She regarded me a moment, in this silent way, and then said, "Eliza, could you do a very brave thing, do you think?"

I felt the blood leave my face and extremities instantly; for the look and words, conjoined, indicated that she was going to require of me something that would test my ability to *act*, as well as to think and resolve.

"What is it?" I asked, faintly; for I felt myself growing a coward at once. But my fearfulness was not weakness, so much as the product of two feelings—my love for uncle, and my dread of aunt. The consciousness that he always fully meant me right, was a restraint upon me when I thought of doing anything that would pain him; and I was never free from a haunting dread of her, whenever I thought, in my weakness, of trying to get away from her. With this explanation of my feelings, one can understand the breathlessness with which I heard Miss Miller begin to tell me what the brave thing was. Her first words were, "You must have some money, Eliza, to go to your friends with."

"Yes," I replied, quickly, very much relieved. "I can work for somebody, to get it. I can do a great deal of work—as much as a woman."

"My dear child, it would take you a very long time to earn money enough to get home with, at anything that you can do—so long that, if you want to get an education, I am afraid it wouldn't do to wait for that."

"How can I get it, then?" I asked, feeling very helpless.

"Did you never earn any money?"

"No."

I was thinking then, not of wages in the broad sense, but of stipulated sums, to be paid when work was done, as I had seen uncle pay men on the farm. "No, they were never to pay me anything, you know, for what I did. I was very small, and couldn't do much for a long time after I came here."

"What were they to do for you, in return for the labor you did perform? They were to take care of you, send you to school, and treat you in all respects as if you were a child of their own. Was it not so?"

"Yes."

"Well, they have never done either, have they?"

"No."

"But you have done a great deal of work. My sister has told me, and other persons in the neighborhood. You have

milked eight or ten cows, night and morning, have you not, every summer, since you were ten years old?"

"Every summer but one, since I was nine, Miss Miller," beginning to feel that I had a righteous claim to something. But I added, by way of balancing what seemed the selfishness of that thought, "I have generally had those that were easiest to milk, and, very often, somebody carried my pails in for me."

Miss Miller smiled; but she noticed what I had said in no other way, and went on—

"You have worked very hard for the last two years. Everybody says you have earned a woman's pay. But have you ever had it? You have not been sent to school; and, fortunately, no money has been expended on you for clothing. There is a large debt due you, Eliza; but we suppose it would not be acknowledged and paid, if you asked for it. Do you think it would?"

"Oh, no."

"Well, then, we think—that is, I, and some other friends of yours to whom I have spoken—that you are entitled to take your pay, as other people do sometimes, wherever you can find it. Your uncle, as you call him, has money, has he not?"

"Yes."

"And you know where it is?"

"Yes, but"——

"But what?"

"I shouldn't like to take his money without telling him of it. It would be—dishonest, would it not?"

I could not utter the more disgraceful word. My spirit revolted at it.

"Under any circumstances but such as yours, it would be dishonest, Eliza, and a thing which no friend would suggest to you; but I have thought a great deal over your position, and I feel quite clear in advising you to do it."

"I am afraid I can't," I said, in a low voice, that but faintly expressed my discouragement. "I never took anything in my

life that was not given to me, but once; and I was so very unhappy about that, that I should be afraid to do this, for fear I should feel so again. When I was coming here, with uncle and aunt, we stopped, one day, at a house where there were three or four little girls, and one of them had a string of amber-colored beads, such as my sister and I had had, at home. She broke the string they were on, while we were there; and there was one smooth one, larger than the others, which sparkled and looked so beautiful in the sunshine, that I wanted it very much. But I dared not ask her for it; so, when I had a chance, I picked it up, slily, and slipped it into the neck of my frock. And I was so very miserable, after we got away, because I could neither carry nor send it back, that I wouldn't suffer so again for the whole world."

"That *was* stealing," said Miss Miller, quietly, unmindful of my burning cheeks and flushed brow. "It was very wrong; but, in a little child of six years, I suppose not so very extraordinary. At any rate, your having suffered so, would be the best assurance that you would not be likely to do such a thing again. But, Eliza, I do not call this stealing, nor dishonesty either; and, if you were not so very ignorant of many things, I ought to be offended with you, and give you up, for supposing that I could advise you to anything wrong or disgraceful. It would be a poor way to help you. No, Eliza, you are wholly mistaken in thinking me capable of anything like that. It is quite right and natural in you, though, to shrink from taking such a step; but you must look on all sides of your case, before you decide."

And she proceeded to lay down its outlines in that clear, practical way, that I had never found used by any one but herself.

How very miserable I was, when I parted from her, to go home! Her arguments and representations had wrought upon my belief fully; but, though I perceived, intellectually, the right of what she said, my heart did not feel it. One last thing that she told me, as we came down-stairs, relieved me somewhat. I

asked if any one besides herself, had advised this, and she told me, "Yes; three or four of those who wish to aid you. But," she said, smiling, "they are not all as courageous as I am. They are unwilling to have their names mentioned, lest it might cause them some difficulty. But I am not afraid, when I see a thing is right; and then, too, I am only a visitor here, and when I go home, I shall escape any annoyance that might come from offending that bad woman. If I can help deliver you out of her hands, I don't care what she thinks of me."

With all my self-reliance, it did comfort my tried soul to know that if, finally, I should have to resort to what Miss Miller proposed, good persons would approve of it. My first thought, when I was alone, was, "What would Henry say to it, if he were here?" I had never yet done anything that I could think he would be grieved at, except reading the infidel books, and falling in with them; and for this I did not accuse myself, because it seemed unavoidable—a necessity of my being and condition. And then that little seed of Faith, and secret worship of something unknown, which I cherished in my heart, as only an immature child could, while talking such arrant infidelity as I sometimes did, seemed to be so much reserved for his sake—so much held sacred to the memory of his affectionate interest in me: of his earnest words, and my great love for him.

I wished much to see Mr. Garland and his wife, but the bad walking forbade it; besides that, I was under very close restrictions, nearly all the time. Whether aunt had a suspicion of some purpose in me adverse to her own, or not, I could not guess; but she was grim, and ungracious, and harsh, to a degree that would have tried me deeply, but for the preoccupation of my thoughts.

About this time—it was the last of sleighing—some young persons in the neighborhood came to our house, one evening, to invite me to ride with them to a spelling-school. I had often heard Betsey and the Edwards girls speak of these schools, and I knew that they were exercises in orthographical skill. The

spelling faculty seems to be a natural gift to some. It was to me. I could not remember ever having learned to spell, and I had been repeatedly warranted a brilliant victory if I could appear on one of these occasions. It was an ambition I had cherished for three or four years, but never had an opportunity of gratifying; and, on this occasion, I asked aunt's permission to go, with a pre-determination to feel myself oppressed and wronged, if she refused. I was denied, in no very gentle terms, and I felt it keenly.

That night, I thought much upon Miss Miller's statement of my case, not without bitterness; and, as I lay, tortured between the desire to be free, and the sense of inability to accomplish so great a thing for myself; and, as always before, thinking that if the money I wanted were aunt's, I should feel no difficulty in doing what Miss Miller advised, it seemed to come clearly to my mind that I ought first to appeal to uncle, in my distress. A moment's reflection on this idea, determined me to try it immediately. But, at breakfast, next morning, he informed us that he was going away, for four or five days, to the county town; and he set off, without my having an opportunity to speak to him alone. I stationed myself at the gate; and, as he was getting on his horse, said, "I was thinking, last night, uncle, that I would like to talk with you again about my going to school."

"When I come back will do, won't it?" he asked, in a half bantering tone, as if he were amused at the idea of my having business which demanded immediate attention.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

We shape ourselves the joy or fear,
Of which the coming life is made;
And fill our Future's atmosphere
With sunshine or with shade."

How little true thought there is of the crises in the life of children and young persons! This business, of which he made a pleasant joke, had already been put off six years. It was to me larger than life, or death, or love, or hope, or any other thing I could think of. It was literally "the be all and the end all," for of late I had thought of nothing beyond it. The glorious dreams of doing, which I had cherished years before, when a very little child, had fled from the fierce struggle of my later thoughts, and quickening purposes.

For the first time uncle's words embittered and hardened me towards him; and, as I walked back into the house, hearing his horse's hoofs crunch the dirty mixture of snow and ice along the road, I felt cold and desolated, and defiled, as the world around me seemed to be.

The house had never been more dreary. An evil spirit appeared to reign over it, and look out upon me from every dark corner and cheerless room. I grew reckless and hard, and almost despised myself for having yielded to the restraints that kept me there so long, in a condition so hateful and unworthy. Uncle's last words rankled like a thorn in my soul. In all my wretchedness I had felt sure of a certain sympathy from him. I did not always demand expression of it, not even by a glance of his eye, or a gesture of his hand. That it was there, had sufficed to comfort and strengthen me greatly, in the times when my spirit was near failing. Now my blood boiled rebelliously

at the thought that my great and growing want was becoming a joke to him.

Only the gentleness and patience of my nature saved me from cursing my lot, and being altogether reckless in that period of waiting. But nothing could ever carry me past a certain line of self-restraint, and this was my salvation. I know not where I should have ended, had I given myself up to the violent feelings that seized me at different times in those days. I thought but little, during their lapse, of the special difficulty that had before weighed heavily upon me. A broader sense of wrong than I had ever before felt, seemed now to overflow the present, and make not only justifiable, but imperative, some step, however desperate.

I learned in this conflict, how much I had before unconsciously hoped from uncle's good nature ; and how little it had ever availed me, or was likely to. I remember distinctly, that while my thoughts were keenly concentered on myself, to the exclusion of facts, books, persons, objects—all that in general so interested me—I had the most sublime, shadowy purposes of rescuing myself by some gigantic effort of my own. The one which most frequently returned to me, was that of walking, when the snow should be gone, and the roads become dry, to some distant town or city, and seeking some rich, and benevolent person for a patron, who would educate me and wait till I could repay the kindness, by the fruits of my knowledge and labor—or if I failed to find such a person, which I could scarcely think possible, believing there were a great many of them everywhere, but in that prison-house to which I was confined, then I could certainly find somebody who would hire me to work, and so I could get money of my own. My satisfaction in this plan, however, was abated by the continually recurring recollection of Miss Miller's condemnation of one something like it, as totally impracticable for my main purpose. It is curious that I scarcely thought of her suggestions or counsels in those memorable days, except in this or some similar connection. I had the highest

respect for her practical ability. What she commended or condemned, I was inclined to consider as settled; but the proposition thus to furnish myself with money, scarcely entered my mind at all, in debating the future from this point. I had now a larger battle to do, I thought, and my defences must be of corresponding dignity.

Aunt was reading some of her brother's books, so that when she had exhausted her ingenuity in ways to keep me on my feet, I was left a good deal to my own thoughts. I never spoke to her when it was not absolutely necessary. A treaty of non-intercourse had been tacitly agreed to between us, which I scrupulously adhered to, as the only security for any degree of the gentleness and freedom that were so necessary to save me from positive outbreak.

During uncle's absence there was a heavy snow-storm. Thus the roads which were before bad, became worse, and I felt myself more closely imprisoned by the weather than by my ill-tempered jailer. At length, he returned. They had seemed a very long four days, but he came at the end of them, though the snow was very deep, and the roads scarcely broken at all. "Everybody," he said, "seemed to be sleeping through the storm." He was disposed to be a little jocose with me, but I repelled it with a solemnity that I intended should warn him, and as he stood without the door, after supper, I said to him, "Uncle, now I want to talk with you alone, about what I spoke of when you were going away."

"It is too cold and snowy, out of doors, Eliza," he replied, "and I don't see how we are to get the fire to ourselves."

"I think aunt may go to bed early this evening," I said, "she has ever since you have been gone, and then we can be alone there."

"Very well, then, I will hear what you have to say, child."

He seemed to be growing unjust too. Hear what I had to say; as if it were a condescension to do so; or as if the subject were new to him. I had little to say—nothing that had not

been said often enough before. It was I who wished to hear what he had to say.

Aunt did not retire early, as I had hoped, but I made a hypocritical pretence of being very anxious to do a certain task at sewing, before I went to bed, and so was permitted to sit till after she retired. Uncle also remained, and as she went, filled his second pipe. As usual, she left her bedroom door open, and neither of us spoke until the deep breathing of sleep assured us we had no auditor. Meanwhile, I was growing breathless and trembling. I waited for uncle to begin, but it seemed as if he would never do so. At length he said, "Well, Eliza, we are alone now; what is it, child?"

I was strangely agitated and could not, for a moment, get breath to reply. Then I said, "I wish to know, uncle, about my going to school."

It seemed as if Satan tempted him to challenge me to the worst, for a smile, commencing at his eyes, flickered over his features. Then he took the pipe from his lips and said, "You will wait till the storm is over before you start, won't you Eliza. It snows a little yet."

I had laid down my sewing, and was looking steadily at him, as calm, now that the first words were over, as I had ever been. I felt a certain sarcasm in his smile and language, and answered it.

"Uncle," I said, "I have waited six years already, and I am not so impatient but that I can wait a few days, or weeks longer; but if I could get to school by going out now and walking all night, the storm wouldn't keep me here." My left hand rested on the edge of the little table before me, and though I sat in front of a blazing fire, it was deathly cold. This was one of the physical indications of an intense agitation with me. Answering to my earnestness, uncle laid his large, warm hand upon mine, and the contact seemed to shock him like an electric touch. He drew back, exclaiming, "Why, Eliza, are you ill? Your hand feels like ice."

"No, uncle," I said, "I am not ill, but I am very unhappy—so unhappy that I am determined not to bear it any longer without doing something for myself, if you do nothing for me." He looked at me in astonishment.

"Do nothing for you!" he repeated; "what do you mean, child? Do I not clothe you? and haven't I promised you you should go to school?"

"Yes, uncle, but when?" There was a long silence. At length I said, growing more bold in the assertion of my rights, from a conviction that he was doing me injustice in his thoughts: "As to the clothing, uncle—I don't wish to find fault, for I care but little about it—but you couldn't very well keep me without clothing, and I have hardly ever had an unnecessary thing, except that silk frock, which I would give to anybody for two or three good books, and the privilege of studying them."

"Eliza," he said, slowly, "I am sorry to hear you confess that you are so ungrateful."

My father had accused me of this, in one of the bitterest trials of my life, when I was submitting to gross wrong, in order to spare myself a greater one, of his inflicting. Then it grieved me; now it roused all the latent anger of my soul, and I answered, with eyes that flashed more than words could utter—and they came sharply and saucily enough—after a minute of indignant, scornful gazing at him:

"I have been clothed in rags ever since I came here. My father was ashamed and shocked at the sight of me, and aunt got me away, and put on my best frock, as quick as she could. My clothes have always been the worst that any child in all the country wore. And now, because I have one good frock, and am not contented, to dress in it sometimes, and be a fool, I am accused of being ungrateful! I am not ungrateful. But I wouldn't thank anybody for gowns of gold, if I had to stay here to wear them!"

Uncle looked at me a short time in silence. Then he laid his

hand on mine again, and said : "This is not right, Eliza. It is very saucy in you to speak so to me ; and if I were like some people, I should box your ears soundly."

"But you won't do it, uncle, because you know what I say is true ; and because you never mean to do wrong to anybody. If I had thought you did, I shouldn't have spoken to you at all."

"What would you have done then, Eliza ?"

"I should have gone away without asking anything of you."

"Gone away !" he repeated ; "have you thought of such a thing, my dear child ?"

"Yes, I have ; and I mean to do it!" determining not to be moved by his remonstrative, tender tone. "I mean to go, uncle, unless—unless you will tell me that you will certainly send me to school before I am fourteen."

"When will that be ?" he asked.

"In about eight months."

"Time enough yet."

"There is not time for me to wait, though, dear uncle, without knowing something for certain."

His silence, after this, conveyed to me a deeper sense of his difficulty in the case, than words could have, and so confirmed my belief that I had nothing to hope from him.

"Uncle," I said, "is it because it would cost a good deal of money to send me to school, that I am kept here ?"

"No, Eliza," he answered ; and I believed him, for there was no touch of the miser in him.

"What then ?"

"Why, child, you know your aunt doesn't wish to spare you from the house."

"But can she do it better when I am older ?"

"I don't see that she can," he replied ; "but she always says, 'By and by—next year will be time enough,' and so on. I do think, though, Eliza, that you shall go in another year. It really will not do to put it off any longer."

"Uncle," I said, "that doesn't satisfy me; and nothing will, but your promising me, as you would promise a man with whom you were doing business, that if we both live till the haying and harvesting are over, next summer, I shall go to school, whether aunt is willing or not."

"I cannot promise you that, child, because I might not be able to do it."

"Would it be aunt's unwillingness only, that would hinder your doing it?" I asked.

"That might hinder me, if it were very great, but other things might, also; though I don't know of anything that would."

This settled my mind at once. It cut off all hope from them, and threw me upon my own energies and decision, as effectually as if they had died at that moment. They were dead to me, and my future.

I resumed my sewing. The argument was over. It was now with myself alone that I had to debate. Uncle relighted his pipe, and seemed much relieved by my return to my work. I can scarcely understand that lack of penetration in a person of so much worth, and such a degree of earnestness; but he seemed to think I was set at rest, and therefore to be pleased himself. He made a remark on some subject quite foreign to the late one, and I replied to it; but then, I said: "Forgive me, dear uncle, if I say a few words more about the school business. They will be the last. How much money would it cost to send me to school a year?"

"I suppose two or three hundred dollars where you will go. You see it is very dear—but I don't think of that. It isn't the want of money that hinders your going, as I said before."

"And you would pay that for me, if I went?" I asked, quite breathless at the idea. I had so little notion of money, or its value, that I was astounded. The only amount I had ever thought of longer than while I was counting it, was what Miss Miller had told me I should want to get home with—and it was scarcely more than an eighth of the smallest sum he had named.

"Yes," he said; "I should pay that for you; and you would have a good deal more for clothing and pocket money. When you go, you shall be as handsomely provided as any girl you'll find there. I won't have it asked, 'Whose child is that, so shabby, and without money?'"

The blood mounted by successive whirls into my head at these words. I was almost blinded by the mist that floated before my eyes for a moment; but I hardened myself resolutely, and by a great effort, said: "Thank you, uncle; I know you would be very kind to me, if you could, and we could be very happy if—if you were really my father," I said at last, not able to say, "if aunt were gone."

"I am all the father you have now, my dear," he said, with swimming eyes, passing his hand over my head. "You never were much better for the one you had, while he lived, and I will be a better father to you than he ever was."

How bitterly I thought, at that moment, that my lot had never been much better for anybody's living—then I corrected myself, and thought, with reverential tenderness—any but one!"

I wished now to be alone, to think. I had decided that there was nothing to wait for further—that I had only to *do* whatever was to be done, as early as possible. But when I lay down in my icy bed, which had never seemed so cold and desolate as that night, because my courage was not at heat point, some good spirit seemed to suggest the thought: "Ask him for the money to go home with, and tell him that you are determined to go; and then, if he refuses, you can have no more doubt." I slept upon this, and next morning, while aunt was occupied a few moments elsewhere, I said, as if our conversation had not been broken off: "Uncle, will you give me money enough to go home with, to my own uncle, and my brothers and sisters?"

"Good God, child! how can you ask me that?" he exclaimed, in a tone and with a look that quite frightened me. "No! I wouldn't have you go for anything." And after a moment, he

added: "My dear Eliza, what in the world are you so tormenting yourself and me for? Have you anything new in your head?"

"No," I replied; "nothing but what I have thought of a great while, and spoken often to you about."

It was strange. He seemed to regard all my earnest talk as childish dreams or idle words. He soon learned it was not.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"The true soul holdeth its own law."

That afternoon a nephew of his came to our house—a youth named Porter—whom I had often seen, but rarely spoken to. I looked hard into his face, while he sat talking, to see if he could be trusted, and finally made up my mind to speak to him. I watched for him outside, standing many inches deep in the snow, in a place where we could not be seen from the windows, and when he came out I said, addressing him by his Christian name: "Would you carry a message for me to Miss Miller?"

"Yes; what is it?"

"I am going to their house to stay."

He started and looked immeasurably astonished.

"Don't speak of it to any one," I said, "till I am gone—*not any one*—and ask her when I shall come, and who will take my trunk for me?"

"I'll take it myself," he said, enthusiastically. "Don't ask anybody else. I should like to help you away from here. I'll go up now, and ask Miss Miller, and bring you word."

"You need not return to-night," I said; "I might not get an opportunity of speaking to you. It will do in the morning, and, if Miss Miller says so, I will go to-morrow night, after they are all in bed here."

"It will be very bad walking," he said, "and it wouldn't do, I suppose, to come for you."

"Never mind the walking, I can do it, and could if it were a great deal worse. I don't care for such little things at all."

I went into the house, feeling that I had taken a great step towards passing the barrier that shut me in. All the evening I was conscious at times of appearing abstracted, and had to recall myself frequently, to my immediate occupations, and the thoughts and words suitable to them.

In the morning the message came from Miss Miller, that I was to go to her that night, if I thought best. The messenger would take my trunk and accompany me, at any time that I would appoint. I said half-past nine, and if anything happened that would prevent my going, I was to give him a signal, by a light at a certain window, in a room that was usually dark.

What an age of emotion I lived through on that day! Sadness and joy, apprehension and expectation, occupied me alternately. I was burning and freezing by turns, according to the character of my predominant feelings. The taking my money had become a trifling event amid the ultimate purposes and thoughts that divided me, but when I stood at the drawer counting it, I wished I could know if Miss Miller had told me what was sufficient to purchase meals on my journey, as well as to pay the people for carrying me, because in that case I could take a few dollars less, and do without food or work for it. Indifference in this was one of my strongest characteristics. I thought I could live many days without eating more than a bit of bread with water, or something equally simple. I was only difficult in the cleanliness of what I ate, and could never overcome an intense disgust I had felt on two or three occasions when, as a little child, some grown person's half-filled plate had been placed before me to take a meal from. I could have fasted a whole day easier than have tasted a morsel from it.

At this time I balanced in my mind the probability of having something offered to me thus offensively if I were not quite inde-

pendent, and I held a three-dollar note some moments in my hand before I could decide whether to take it, or risk the charities of the long road. It just made, in addition to those I already held, the sum specified, but I dropped it back into the drawer, as a strong wave of self-reliance swept over my soul. "I shall at any rate get near enough home without that," I said, "to get on the remainder of the way somehow or other."

I took the money early in the morning, because I had a kind of satisfaction in giving them an opportunity of missing it before I should leave the house; but this did not happen, though I was made very nervous between the hope and fear that it might—once especially—when a man came to receive some money which uncle was to pay him that day. When he left my room, with the notes in his hand, I looked into his face, but saw nothing there different from the careless expression of easy good-nature with which he always paid money that he owed. It seemed to be one of his great pleasures, and it increased my respect for him immensely now, when, for the first time, I had some notion of the value of money and the importance it must give one. For I had balanced in my mind the having plenty or being a beggar on the road, till I saw that a few dollars more or less would make a vast difference in one's feelings.

I felt such an absence of all meanness in uncle, as I pondered these things after the man was gone, that I believe I should have gone to him and told him that I was going home, and how, but for the thought of what he had said when I asked him to give me money for that purpose. I knew he would never willingly consent to my leaving in any way, and so I had to bury my thoughts, and endeavor to appear as natural and unconstrained as possible.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Courage was cast about her like a dress
Of solemn comeliness;
A gathered mind and an untroubled face
Did give her danger's grace."

The short winter day, which had been sunny and warm, with occasional flocks of fleecy clouds leaning against the high, blue heavens, came to a close. Just before sunset a grey mist spread itself over the earth, threatening storm, and the bland air and softened, damp snow indicated that it would be rain. This parting of the seasons had always been particularly delightful to me. A warm rain late in winter, when I knew the spring was near at hand, had a peculiar charm. It seemed to put away the past and open the beautiful future. I hated the winter. My love of the beautiful was not pure and strong enough, perhaps, to enable me to rejoice in its magnificent sternness, its fantastic traceries, its wide-spread silence, and vast, pure monotony of white.

The late dinner was over, and I stood long in the snow where the tents had been, thinking. I did not grieve, for now the battle had commenced in which he had foretold I should be victor. It was no time for idle lamentation or mourning. I rather wished, under the new circumstances, to renew the by-gone—to burnish to a brighter lustre, the golden links that bound me at once to that spot in the past, and to the highest possible in the future. I was healthy, and therefore I felt myself equal to any exertion. I was enthusiastic, and therefore entirely hopeful. I was aspiring and earnest, and therefore as resolute as the lion-hunter, who penetrates the jungle while it is yet vibrating to the

roar and march of his enemy. Nothing, I then resolved, should turn me back—not even my concern for uncle, which was the only vulnerable point in the whole view. I was repairing and steeling this all the evening. Quite unconscious, quite unwarned by any work, or look, or act, though I felt as if heaven and earth must witness all, he sat and read, and talked, and smoked till nine o'clock. Then he rose to retire, and after he had entered his sleeping-room called to tell me, that he wished me to be up very early next morning; he had to go from home, and wanted an early breakfast. This was a new difficulty. I could not utter the falsehood of a promise, yet I must reply.

"Do you hear me, child?" he asked, after waiting for my answer.

"Yes, uncle. Will you have hot corn-cakes for your breakfast? I have learned how to make them very nicely now."

"Yes, make me some; and fry some ham and eggs."

I could not answer I will; but he said no more, and in a few minutes was asleep. Aunt followed him directly, after bidding me go to bed at once, which I promised to do, rising at the same time. It was so strange, at that moment, to feel the difference between them. I cared nothing about saying to her what was true or untrue. Falsehood seemed to lose its real character when uttered to her for any furtherance of my plans. I felt her evil presence so broadly and viciously, that the necessity to escape it became a clear instinct; and she, as creating it, sunk quite below the line of moral relation to me. I spoke to her without concern or feeling, except a secret joy that I should see her no more.

As soon as she retired I went to my room. I had previously packed my very small wardrobe into my trunk, and now I put on the little green hood that had been made for me three or four years before, and which was consequently a great deal too small; my only shawl, which was a cotton one I had brought from the home I was going back to, and my woollen mittens. I lifted the trunk and placed it in the front passage, and, having

extinguished the candle, opened the door carefully and passed out. It was not more than ten minutes from the time I left the fireside till I left the hateful threshold, as I hoped and believed, for the last time. My escort had not yet come, and while I was waiting for him my soul was filled with strength and contentment, the first fruits of the great step I was taking. I had forgotten where I was, and how I came there, when a low voice close to me said: "You are before the time, I guess, but never mind." And then to my astonishment he added, that the rain had made the walking more sloppy than ever.

"Has it rained," I asked, "since dark?"

"Why, it's raining now, I should say," he replied. "Turn your face towards the sky, and you'll feel it, I guess."

"It is very strange," I said; "my face is already wet, because my hood doesn't cover it, but I did not know it till you spoke."

"I hope you are not going crazy for joy," he said.

"Oh, no!" I replied, quietly; "there is no danger of that."

By this time we were several rods from the house, and through the dark, I thought I saw a horse standing beside the fence. It startled me, and I inquired, in a whisper, what it meant.

"It is one that I rode down to take this up on," said young Porter, lodging the trunk, at the same moment, on the fence, at the animal's head. "I couldn't carry it through the snow and water a mile or more. You must help to get it up before me, and then you can ride behind, if you like; he is gentle enough."

"No, I thank you. I'll help you with the trunk, but I would rather walk."

"You'll find it very wet," he said; "and I think it's foolish to walk, when you can ride. But you always are odd."

"I expect," I said, with a thought he was not very likely to understand, "to have to walk all my life, and I may as well begin at once."

"Well, suit yourself," he replied, in an indifferent tone; "I am glad I am not going all the way with you, though."

When we reached the house, which I had never before entered, my garments were wet through above my knees, and the rain, though very light, and falling gently, had dampened my upper clothing very much. But I was warm without being heated, and so calm, that my friends looked at me in astonishment. I told Miss Miller, in a few words, what I had done, and wished to do, all which she and her sister warmly approved. I did not see the husband. He had retired. We sat by the fire, and talked till my garments were dry, and then my friend took me up to share her bed. No one alluded to what was likely to happen in the morning, when I should be missed, and I said nothing about it; though before I slept, it began to occupy and disturb my mind not a little.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"The trust I have is in mine innocence;
And therefore, I am bold and resolute."

I was awakened early by a noise at the outside door; and, as my faculties came slowly and reluctantly out of the blessed unconsciousness of sleep, I found myself sitting up in a bed, alone, listening to a voice which, I thought, uttered my name. Some quiet words followed, which I could not make out; and, by and by, I heard footsteps ascending the stairs. I was already half dressed, when my friend entered the room, with an excited and defiant face. I knew there was something to be heard.

"What is it, Miss Miller?" I asked.

"Nothing to be alarmed at," she replied, kindly. "Mrs. Smalley is down-stairs."

"Has she come here? I thought she never would, for anything."

"For nothing but you, I think. She wants to take you back."

"But I am not going! You may tell her so."

"Will you come down and speak to her?—you need not be afraid of her here. I think she is more disturbed than angry at your leaving her."

"I won't speak to her," I said, "if you will tell her, for me, that I am going home, and how much money I have—here it is; you can show it to her—and, that if she would give me a hundred times as much, I would not go back to her house!"

Miss Miller took the little roll of notes—there were twenty-five dollars, and she had told me I should want twenty-eight. She did not open them then, but stood, looking thoughtfully down, till I became alarmed, and said: "Is there any new trouble, Miss Miller, that makes you think so long?"

"No," she replied, slowly, looking up; "nothing but what I ought to have foreseen, but did not. It is very odd, certainly. But don't make yourself uneasy," she added, lightly, after a moment, going towards the stairs. "I'll manage it." She went down two or three steps, and then, suddenly returning, said: "Come down, and stop on the last stair, if you will not go into the room, and you can hear all that passes. You will know better, then, than if I relate it to you."

I went, more to comply with her request, than from any interest in what was likely to be said. When she entered the room, the first words were from aunt: "Where is that foolish, obstinate girl?"

I was quite bewildered at the gentleness of the speech, as well as the tone in which it was spoken. I expected to hear railing and abuse of the sharpest kind.

"She refuses to see you, madam," said Miss Miller.

"What is she going to do?"

"She wishes to go home to her friends."

"She shall not go in this way, though, if I can help it. Who is going to help her there? Has thee got money to give her?" she asked, with an unmistakable sneer.

"If I had," replied my friend, warmly, "you may rest assured she would have it."

"Why didn't she ask me for money, and wait till she could travel."

"Would you, then, have given it her?" asked Miss Miller.

"Yes, and think myself well rid of her. She has been the plague of my life, ever since I had her."

"Excuse me, madam, if I help your memory," said Miss Miller. "Report does you great injustice, if you have not had several, besides her, nearly as bad. We hear that your relations to every one are most unhappy, and people naturally feel interested for an orphan child, who is unprotected and friendless among people that are violent and unjust. I do not accuse your husband, madam; my words are intended to apply to yourself alone."

There was a silence. Presently Miss Miller said, in an earnest, impressive tone: "I have no wish, Mrs. Smalley, to injure your feelings, or rouse your anger against myself, or any one else. I said what I did, because I love to speak my thoughts honestly, and because I believe that you must yourself be capable of feeling, in some measure, the truth of what I said. Think calmly, for one moment, if you can, how you have treated Eliza these six years, and I am sure you will feel that, if she were your daughter, deprived of father and mother, and so situated, you would wish her to find friendly help somewhere."

"What does she want now?" asked aunt, abruptly, after a moment's pause, refusing to admit any degree of conviction.

"She wants, as I have told you, to go home."

"She told my husband she wanted to go to school."

"Yes, she does; but it is impossible she should do so, till she gets among her friends."

"Friends! She has no friends! They are beggars, from first to last! Her father, I believe, was something worse than that!"

"She is more unfortunate, then, than I thought," said Miss

Miller, "and more entitled to help and sympathy from strangers."

"But thee is a woman of common sense," said aunt, impatiently, "and thee knows nobody can travel five or six hundred miles without money. Where is Eliza to get enough to go with?"

"That has been thought of," said my friend, "before you asked the question."

I was astonished and vexed at her indirectness. Why didn't she tell her, and show her the money, at once. For, since my talk with uncle, I had come to regard it as a very small part of what he had acknowledged, in effect, to be mine, which no one would question my right to.

"It is thought," she added, after a minute's pause, "that you owe her many times the sum required to pay her way to her friends."

"If we do," was the answer, "I'm thinking it'll be hard work to get it. My husband shall never give her a dollar, unless she comes back, and behaves as she ought to."

"Suppose we already had it?" said Miss Miller.

"What does thee mean?"

"Suppose we already had enough of what you justly owe her, to carry her home?"

"Has John been fool enough?"——she began, passionately.

"No, no," said Miss Miller; "he has done nothing of the sort."

"How did she get it, then?"

"She took it for herself."

"Stole it?"

"No," replied my friend, in a full, strong utterance; "we, Eliza's friends, call it giving you a large debt, for the payment of a very small portion of it. Here is the money. I don't know how much—ten, fifteen, twenty-five—twenty-five dollars! Excuse me," she said, apparently in answer to an offer or attempt

to take it from her hand ; " excuse me—it was put in my keeping, and I shall return it to the owner."

" I'll put you both in prison," was the passionate exclamation, when she next spoke.

" You will hardly put me in prison," said Miss Miller, " and therefore it is not worth my while to answer your threat, for myself. But if Eliza could be sent, I should deserve to go with her, for I first advised her taking this money, and had a great deal of difficulty to persuade her that it would be right. But I told her to get more than she has here. This is not enough."

" Are you all grown mad or fools ?" exclaimed aunt, almost unable, between rage and astonishment, to speak. " You talk to her about stealing money, as if"——

" As if," said Mrs. Miller, coming to her help, " we were not at all ashamed or sorry; and we are not, I assure you. You are able to call the act by a disgraceful name, but its real character depends on the circumstances and motives which justify it, and those are so entirely right, and so generally acknowledged, that if they are made more public than they already are, you will be the disgraced party. I have not spoken to a man or woman since I have been in the country, who does not feel and talk as I do, about it, and if you should attempt to prosecute or injure the child, friends would rise up for her everywhere, and you would be scorned, while she would be protected and aided in spite of you."

" The little wretch !" were the next words; and as they were hissed, rather than spoken, I entered the room. I could bear my position no longer, for though I had not been agitated by what I had heard, I did not like being witness to a conversation which one party was ignorant of my hearing ; and I wished also to explain why I had brought but twenty-five instead of twenty-eight dollars. I looked full into the face of my old tormentor, but did not speak a word that she could consider as addressed to her, but went on to tell Miss Miller of my talk with uncle, and of the expense he said he was ready to incur to

send me to school, if his wife were willing; and that this had made me anxious to get along with the least amount that was possible; and I added, "I thought if I got as far as the twenty-five dollars would carry me, I should certainly be able to get home from there somehow or other." By the time I had finished speaking, aunt's anger appeared to have subsided. I do not know if some slenderest vein of human tenderness, at that moment, poured its softening current into her heart, or if it were a great effort at dissimulation, of which, under certain circumstances, she was capable to a profound degree; but Miss Miller had no chance to reply to my words, before she said, "Eliza, come home with me. Thy uncle feels very bad at thy conduct."

"Why didn't he come and see me, then?" I asked.

"Because he doesn't like to come to this house," she said; "I didn't myself; but one of us had to."

"I should like to see uncle," I said, "and tell him about the money; for it seems to me a little different since it has been talked over; but I can't go there to see him."

"I want thee to come back," she said, "and stay."

"But I never shall do it; I want to go home."

"Why didn't thee go with thy father when he was here, and not wait to act so like—like a little bad girl?"

The last words she uttered with a very ill grace, and I knew just as well as if she had uttered them, that the worst she could have spoken would have suited her much better. They did not deceive me at all.

"I can't tell you," I replied, "why I did not go with my father. I wanted to very much; but that is more than two years ago, and I am a great deal worse off now than I was then, because I am so much older."

"If thee will go home with me now, thee shall go to school next summer."

"You have said so many times," I said, "but I have never gone."

"But thee shall now; I will promise it in presence of thy friend, here."

"I don't know that the promise would be more binding on that account," said Miss Miller, severely.

It would be tedious to relate the long conversation which followed. Let it suffice that I at last acceded to her wish, after she had been strongly hedged in with promises, which, as Miss Miller said, if she did not keep, with tolerable faithfulness, would be a sufficient reason, on her own showing, for my leaving her at any time. What was of the greatest importance to me, I bound her to most strongly, the privilege of books, reading, and study. I did not care so very much for another six months there, if I could be helping myself in these ways; and so I went back with comparative indifference, and a sense, on the whole, of partial victory. I had asserted myself to the extent of making my position much less oppressive, and I felt that having taken this step, it would be easier, if it were necessary, to take a second and final one, when the right time should come.

Miss Miller left me to decide for myself, but when I had done so, she encouraged and advised me very faithfully. "One of two things you will see done now," she said, "either they will treat you better, or they will keep the money-drawer locked from you. If that is done you will soon see that you are no better off. But I am more reconciled to your going back, because if she could get her husband to charge you with stealing this money—don't flush so painfully, child, it would prevent you from going home, at present, for then you would have to wait till you are fourteen, and choose a guardian, who might possibly get something from them for your services. The lawyers tell me it might be done, but it would take forever, and cost a deal of money too. I am better content as it is with you, and you will be able to right yourself in future, I think."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

——"Thou strivest nobly,
When hearts of sterner stuff perhaps had sunk."

Uncle was very glad to see me back in his house again, and I did not conceal from him that his pleasure was the only positive satisfaction I found in being there. I took my usual tasks, with more than my former alacrity; for I felt a conscientious obligation, as well as an ardent wish, to put nothing in the way of my stipulated privileges. The common discomforts and petty annoyances of my position were trifles which I should have despised myself for complaining of now. But this consuming desire to know; this iron purpose, that would bend to nothing—that I could not fold away, to slumber, by any effort of my will—this, I felt I could now satisfy, in a degree, with the dignity that my new liberty gave me; and I would make it as large and perfect as my efforts could.

Thus I enlarged my knowledge of arithmetic enough to have a notion of the difference between the four fundamental processes, and to be able to perform addition and multiplication with tolerable facility. Books were very scarce among those rude people; but being free to seek them, as I never had been before, I found here and there a volume which helped me essentially. I was permitted to practise writing; occasionally required to assist in making up accounts, and the post-office returns; and left to examine and close the mail, which, this year, came to us tri-weekly. After a little training, I was able to be quite useful in this way; and uncle used to call me his clerk, and give me orders, with immense satisfaction.

I was very seldom now told that I was a fool. I was never

personally abused, and only had to take my share of a violence that flowed out, at times, upon everybody within its reach. I did not, therefore, feel degraded by it. The increased respect with which I was treated, was like sunshine to a growing plant. I no longer was driven to those wild speculations which had, except in times of calm resolution, so shadowed my inner life with distrust of the possible. I felt myself, slowly, indeed, but actually, growing into something like the reality of my long-cherished dreams.

I gave Miss Miller accounts of my going on, when I saw her occasionally, at a neighbor's (for she came no more to our house); and they seemed so satisfactory to her, that I was more strengthened in my hope that all would yet be right, than I could be by any conclusions of my own mind. I had a great respect for Miss Miller. Without loving her, as I thought I should have, two years before, had she shown me the same kindness, I felt a clearness and courage in her, which edged my own up to their highest efficiency. I relied very much on her.

"Their not keeping the money locked from you," she said, one day, "is the most encouraging thing you tell me. I think they mean right, or they would do that."

"But," I said, "if all were wrong, and I meant to go away, I should never touch that again. I should try some other plan. I feel much better since I have gone back, and more as if I could do something for myself; and, besides, uncle's trusting and treating me so kindly, would make it impossible for me to do anything again that would seem a wrong to him. If I don't go to school this summer or fall, at the latest, I shall write home to my own uncle, to come for me. I can do it now, whenever I like to.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"Long have I sighed for a calm;
God grant I may find it at last!"

The summer tasks—the heavy dairying, and the large family—always seemed to have a bad effect on aunt's temper. She grew more irritable, and exacting, and impatient, till they were done. I could not then understand, what I now do, that her aggravated tempers, in those times, were due to her over-tasked condition, and ought, therefore, to excite the feeling nearest akin to sympathy, that could be exercised towards her. But, even at the worst, this season, she treated me with a fuller recognition of my human life than ever before; and I bore whatever came in times when she seemed to forget this, with a patient self-respect, because I believed that the time of my reward was at hand.

When the haying and grain harvest were over, I looked, daily, for some broaching of the great change which I thought I stood on the verge of. Whenever we then were by ourselves, I was thinking the first words would be about my leaving home. When uncle began to speak to me alone, I felt a glow of expectation steal over me. When aunt sat down, in the afternoons, and called me to comb her hair—which, though small, I was now able to do without the footstool—I listened at every word for those which my ears ached to hear. Thus, week after week of the fall season went by, and I was fast growing into a proud, bitter sense of being wronged, in the face of every sort of deserving that I had been able to exercise—and settling into a state of despair, which always preceded desperate resolving with me, when a calamity came upon us which caused me to forget, for many weeks, myself and my wishes.

Aunt was seized with a violent illness. A malignant fever prevailed, in the late fall and through the winter; and she was one of many who suffered from it. I was then nurse and housekeeper, with the help of uncle in the former capacity, and the boy in some of the coarser offices of the latter. It was a very heavy season to me. The mysterious phenomena of a violent illness, which, for many days, darkened the infirm soul, oppressed me fearfully. I had never witnessed it before. My labor, too, was ceaseless. It involved, often, the loss of rest, and destroyed my appetite. For many days, we expected death; and that banished, from hour to hour, every possibility of repose. She had often boasted her belief that death was the end of all; and my soul recoiled from its approach now, with an inconceivable horror. Yet I could not restrain myself from speculating upon what, if it were not this, it would be to her—a spirit so trailed in the dust of passion and madness; so defiant and unloving. I was very miserable with all these thoughts, and this never-ending toil and care; so that, at last, when what the doctor called the crisis, was past, and I saw her look better than ever before, because subdued and dependent, I was obliged to ask uncle to get somebody for a few days, for I really was incapable of going on.

"Yes, to be sure," he said, "I ought to have thought of that before; I hope you are not going to have the fever too. Let me see your tongue."

"No," I said, "I don't mean to have it, however my tongue looks; I am only very tired." And I did not have it, chiefly, I believe, as the doctor, who was impudent, coarse, and thoroughly detestable to me, said, 'because I had such a devilish will, and wouldn't let it come on.' But I lagged about in a very miserable condition for several days, without appetite or sleep; seeing the winter come on, and my last hope of getting away, die out utterly, before the flying snows of December, and aunt's still prostrate condition. I had completed my fourteenth year, during that season of wretchedness, and now I was thoroughly despondent. There was at least no hope till another spring.

Before she was recovered sufficiently to leave her bed, a man, a laborer on the farm, was taken down of the same illness; and he had to be nursed many weeks, which uncle used kindly to try to cheer me through, by praising my courage in resisting the disease, and saying jocose, pleasant things about our common housekeeping. But I could not be cheered. A great, and final disappointment seemed settling down upon me, which it took all my philosophy to bear, without open rebellion. That winter was a very severe one—the coldest and most snowy I could remember ever to have seen. It seemed as I used to look out upon the grim acres of huge snow-banks, and see fresh supplies falling upon them from the grey, sullen clouds, that nature, too, was in the conspiracy against me. For I felt every adverse circumstance, as an unfriendly act from some remote, vague personality somewhere, which I should probably have called my fate, or fortune, or destiny, or by some name that would give me a right to expect better things of it.

At length the snow began sensibly to diminish; bare spots appeared in the fields and meadows, and one night a warm rain commenced falling after I went to bed, and when I rose in the morning, the first pulsation of joy I had known for many months stirred my heart, at sight of the naked, brown earth. It unlocked the prison doors of my spirit. Already I felt more free, and when, in a few days, the wild-fowl were heard, I was for a short season again happy. The spring marched on with rapid and unbroken pace. It was like those magical days I had read of, which come in that season, in the high northern latitudes. From morning to night I fancied I could see a visible change in the vegetation along the sunny bank of the creek, which had raged in its maddest height when the snow was carried off so suddenly. And in sheltered places in the orchard and meadows, I had buds and unfolding leaves of ground-plants by which I measured the advance of the season.

With all this return of life came back my resolution. I thought and felt no longer as a child. I would have no more

experiments like those of the last year—nor be any longer paltered with by promises. Miss Miller had returned to her home in a neighboring State, with the first possible travelling, and so I had no longer any confidential friend. Of the other good people who had befriended me, there was not more than one or two, whom I could understand, now that I was reasonably well treated in the family, why I should not be content; and I thus felt that my strength and help must come from my own soul. One circumstance that was pleasant to me at this season, I have omitted to mention. Mr. Radford came with his wife and their two little children to live in a part of our house, a large, new part, as yet in a very rude, unfinished state. I had not seen much of them since that event, which, four years before, had introduced a new era into my life. Whatever happened to me, I reckoned from that—after or before, as we date from the time of Christ.

Mr. Radford was the same good friend he had ever been, to the extent that was possible with his enlarged personal interests. His wife was much more than she had been when I was the strange, selfish-looking child of those past years. She had grown in her character of mother, and I in years and nature, till we were separated but by a small distance now, measured by that which had divided us on the night when we compared ages—the night that closed that day so memorable to me. Her children were a delight to uncle and me. They were beautiful and sweet as the flower-buds which come between the desolation of the past, and the full glory of the future. I had but once before enjoyed the delight of being with babies, but for a rare hour or two. They were a new revelation to me, and gave me many hours of the most exquisite happiness.

The month of April came, and brought with it no indications of a change in my fortunes, nor any tidings from my sisters, which I had expected all winter. I was at this time intrusted with most of the ordinary post-office business, and the books were seldom examined after me, so that I determined about the

tenth of that month to write to my uncle in New York, a letter so decided that it would bring him to me at once. I followed it the next week by a second, fearing the first might miscarry, in both which, I engaged to wait where I was, the requisite time for the letter to go and the journey to be performed—and one week beside. After that, if nobody came, I informed him I should leave my present home, and do what was possible for myself, but I could not at all conjecture where or what that would be. No one knew of my writing but Mrs. Radford, and she was very desponding as to the result. To myself I am not aware that there seemed at that time much choice. I was full of health and resolution; life had flowed into my soul from the gorgeous season which sat enthroned in glory among the blooming orchard trees, and in the great forests and tender meadows. The beautiful children had touched a new and full fountain of love and strength in my heart, and existence was a larger and clearer thing to me by all that most Divine instinct to which they appealed, which had before slumbered. There was more to live and struggle for, and my strength seemed proportionably increased.

CHAPTER XL.

"Fare thee well, old world! Fare thee well, old world!"

I had engaged to wait seven weeks from the time of my last writing. They had passed and no letter or person came to me. It was Tuesday evening, the last day of my waiting. Aunt had visitors, and Mrs. Radford was at tea with them. The stage came late, and the mail was tumbled into the office with a surly request, by the driver, to have it ready before he "could say Jack Robinson." I could be very quick when I chose, for my head was clear and my hands supple, and as I expected this

would be the last time I should ever send the mail that way—for I determined to be gone before forty-eight hours should pass—I chose to use my utmost powers, and I locked the bag and threw it out of the door before he had his pipe lighted; a feat which so astonished him that he stood gazing at me in mute wonder, with one eye closed and the other opened to its widest capacity, till I said: "I thought you were in a hurry?"

"So I am," he said; "in the biggest hurry you ever saw, but I didn't expect to get off so soon as this. You better look in there again, young one; you couldn't sort them all so soon, I know."

"They are all right," I replied, and I turned away and opened a paper to read till I should be called. I walked with it in my hand to the door, and when the stage rattled away from the gate, with a great clatter, I glanced up and saw a one-horse wagon, occupied by a quiet, respectable-looking, middle-aged man, driven into its place. He made his horse fast, and as he walked up to the door I retreated into the passage and sat down, still reading.

"Does Mr. Smalley live here?" he inquired, tapping lightly on the door-post with his whip.

I looked up and replied: "Yes, sir; Mr. John Smalley lives here."

"Is he at home?"

"Yes, sir, he is with the carpenters in the new house. If you step along a little in front of it you will be able to go in on the boards, and you'll find him there."

By this time I was flushing under the steady gaze of this stranger, who, whenever I lifted my eyes to his face, was regarding me so closely that I was troubled. He also stood still, instead of going to look for uncle, as I expected and wished him to.

I pushed a chair towards him, and said: "Will you sit down, sir, and I will call uncle?"

I approached the door to pass out, and at the same moment he entered, and said: "Eliza, don't you know me?"

I gave him one piercing look, and plain as he was I could recall enough of my father, and my own very dim recollection of himself, to know that it was my liberator, and I called his name aloud, and clung to his neck in such a delirium of sudden joy, as summoned the people from both sides to see what had happened. The first face I saw clearly was aunt's, spotted, livid, distorted with anger and astonishment. She knew that name. The sight of her restored me instantly to self-possession, and loosing my hold of my uncle, I said: "Aunt, this is my uncle William, come for me. I wrote to him seven weeks ago."

The expression of countenance which these words called up, was such a one as I had not seen for many months. Uncle, who had also come in, in time to hear the introduction, came forward and greeted my relative, and invited him into the room where the tea-table was yet standing. Everybody seemed as breathless as myself, and I remember distinctly a feeling of thankfulness that at last, for once, it was my turn to be the glad and happy one in a group where I had been so long and steadily overlooked and put down. The table was fresh laid, and I sat down with my two uncles, and hugged the sparkling, gleeful baby who was very fond of me; all the while, at little intervals, dashing my intense joy with the thought of parting so soon from him. His mother hovered about, waiting on us, and occasionally giving me a silent pressure of the shoulder or arm, as she had a pretext for laying her hand upon me.

Aunt sat at the tea-tray, utterly dispossessed of her usual self. She looked like a person who is suddenly quite overturned, by finding everything go wrong when she had thought all was right. She scarcely spoke, and when she did, it was in a manner that showed how closely her mind was preoccupied. Once or twice, while we sat, I found uncle's eyes fixed on me, with a suffused, appealing look, that I felt it dangerous in that time of keen excitement to meet. We had had so much in common during the sickness of the previous winter, so many joint cares and sympathies, that, but for the dreadful state of apathy in me which fol-

lowed them, and but for a lurking bitterness, growing out of the sense of wrong which mingled with my best feelings towards him, I should have become from that period more inseparably attached to him than to any person living. If he had done me justice then, by courageously following his own convictions of right, nothing could have separated my heart from him.

There was enough in the talk at table, following my open avowal of what had brought my uncle there, to convey his intention of returning without delay. He asked me: "If I still wished to go, and when I could be ready?"

"To-morrow morning," was my reply.

"Isn't that rather soon, Eliza?" said my adopted father.

"No; not if Uncle William is in a hurry."

"I think thee is in a hurry, too," said aunt.

"Yes, I am; I have been wanting to go a long time."

When we left the table, uncle and aunt walked with my own uncle into the new part which the workmen had left. I busied myself, betwen short ecstasies with the children and snatches of talk with their mother, in getting together my small chattels personal—now, indeed, for the last time in that house.

I had finished, and Mrs. Radford and I sat talking, till they returned, when I asked my uncle what time he wished to start for home.

He replied: "I must go in the morning; but are you quite sure, Eliza, that it is best for you to go? Your uncle and aunt tell me"—

"Don't say it, please, Uncle William; I must go with you."

"Remember," he said, "that you are a young girl, and don't know as well perhaps as older people what will be best for you."

We left the room as he was saying:

"I have come to take you back, and though you have no father, and I don't clearly see how you are to be taken care of, I shall not leave you now, if you wish to go; I only wanted to tell you what Mr. and Mrs. Smalley offer, because I said I would; but I am not going to leave you unless you wish it."

"Then it is settled," I said, very determinedly, "for if you leave me here, I shall go away myself somewhere, to-morrow, and nothing shall bring me back."

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"Yes, all ready."

"Well, go to bed, then, and rest yourself, for you will have to ride all day and all night, after we start. And, Eliza, I want you to learn to speak more like a young girl. You are not a woman, remember; and young girls ought not to say what they will, and won't do, so freely as you do. Now, go to bed, child."

I was deeply vexed by this treatment. "Am I to be forever misjudged and misunderstood?" I asked myself, passionately, as I stood in my room, never thinking of undressing, though the clock struck twelve while I walked and pondered. "My father found fault with me, too," I thought; "nobody has ever been kind and just to me, but *Henry!*"

My uncle's remonstrance clouded my joy, darkly. "Why," I thought, "am I to be reproved, for saying what is asked of me, and what is true? Uncle William is wrong," I said to myself, sitting down again upon my trunk, from which I had just risen but a moment before. "He is wrong, I am certain, and I don't see how we are to get on at all, if he asks me to say what I want, and then reproves me for doing it." I was so untrained, that I could not see that his objection was to my manner, which, after all I had suffered, I thought could not be decided enough to express my state of mind.

It was the first of June, and what a glorious morning shone down upon the smiling earth! I was dressed and out before it was full dawn, for I wished to pay a farewell visit to the spring; to Sunny-bank, and the tent-grove; and to run down to the nut-trees and plum-thicket, before I should be wanted at breakfast.

These partings saddened me—not with regret, but with painful recollections of my few and peculiar joys—so that when I

presented myself at table, I was in no danger of offending my uncle's respect for the conventional restraints suitable to my age. My clothes were dabbled with dew, and my shoes quite saturated. Aunt remarked upon these appearances, and I explained where I had been. I sat down, but ate no breakfast, and Uncle John took as little. It was a heavy morning to him, but he could not speak to me of remaining, for he understood too well how small was his right to hint at such a thing.

CHAPTER XLI.

"The thickly-peopled and the vast Before!"

When breakfast was over, aunt drew my uncle aside, and formally asked him if I would consent to be left; and when he told her I would not, she said, in a warning, sympathetic tone: "I am afraid thee'll find her a very headstrong girl. I've done my best to break her, but I know I have only half succeeded."

I took little Alfred, and carried him away to the bank of the creek, where he was very fond of going with me, and remained there until I was called. I saw Uncle John walking among the trees, where the tents had been, but I did not dare approach him, for he had forgotten his after-breakfast pipe, and was making occasional use of his pocket-handkerchief, so that I understood it would not do for me to see him alone. When I went to the house, I found my uncle standing at the door, whip in hand, waiting:

"Come, Eliza," he said, "it is time we were going. Get yourself ready, and let me have your trunk."

"I'll take that out," said Mr. Radford, who had not left the house.

As I passed into my little room with him, he said, in a tone

he would have me believe jocose : "Now, Dolly, you're off, eh ? No more Dolly, nor Tonewanda, but Miss, now, is it ?"

Something shot, with a scalding heat, into my eyes, as I looked at him saying these old, long-forgotten words. He had grown older since I had examined his features before—at least, it seemed to my dimmed eyes that he had. Perhaps, also, his old names for me brought back his picture, as he used to look long ago, when calling me by them. He stooped over to raise the trunk, and I offered him my hand in silence. When he grasped it in his, he said : "It's larger now than it was when you used to tuck it into mine, to get me away somewhere with you. Don't forget me, Dolly, when you get among finer people, and go to school, and become a wise woman."

I could only shake my head, and he walked out. Thus our parting was over, for when he had placed the trunk in the wagon, he went away out of sight. I kissed his good wife and the sweet children over and over again, with many tears ; but when, at last, I stepped away from them, and found aunt standing near, apparently waiting for her share of the leave-taking, my feelings underwent a change, as instantaneous as the lightning-flash.

"Good bye, aunt," I said, and was passing towards the door, when she extended her hand. I gave her mine, because I felt amiable in the good fortune, which fronting her had reminded me of. She had never kissed me in the seven long years I had been "her daughter," and I had no mind she should do it now. So we parted at arms' length, and I darted away to the gate. There I found the two uncles, in conversation, tears showering down the face of one, and the other looking puzzled and half distressed.

"Get in, Eliza;, don't keep your uncle waiting," were the first words; "and I'll walk along with you a little way."

We drove slowly away, and when we reached the turn, he laid his hand on the side of the wagon, and, with broken utterance, said : "Good bye, my child ; I am sorry to part with you.

I always meant to make you happy, and do right by you!"

"I know you did uncle; and I have always loved you, and always shall. Good bye!" and I knelt down from off the seat, and kissed him, with a keenness of pain I had not felt in parting with my own father. When I looked up, the magnificent crab-apple trees, in full flower, and redolent of a fragrance sweet as ever freighted the gales of Araby, were on my left, and Mrs. Rumsey, in her doorway, on my right. I bowed her good bye—and we drove on—into the wide, unknown world.

CHAPTER XLII.

"I would enjoy the present, I would live
Like one new born."

That was a day of Polar length. It was the first of fourteen or fifteen days' steady travel, which uncle said it would take us to reach his home. Looking forward to them, they seemed to me sufficient for a lifetime. I fancied that I might be an old woman by the time they came to an end; ready to die, almost.

We had to pass the place on the lake-shore where Henry was buried, and I wished very much to go to his grave; but I did not know where it was, and dared not mention my desire to my uncle, though I rode through what I knew was the neighborhood, with an intense yearning for a sight of it—for one refreshing emotion of nearness to what had been so bright and grand in the dark life I was leaving behind. We rode long within sound of the lake before we saw it, and I was looking eagerly, and, at last, impatiently, for the sight, when we ascended a cleared hill, and there lay the broad world of light blue water before my eyes. I have since spent months on the ocean, but never again was the emotional experience of that hour mine!

I was a strange, and not altogether a comfortable travelling companion to my quiet relative. The incongruities of my appearance worried him—my dark, strong face—my extraordinary dress, and my singular manners. If I spoke to a stranger, he was quite certain to check me, and many times each day he found it necessary to beg that I would be as quiet, and attract as little attention as possible, till he could get me home, where I could be, at least outwardly, Christianized.

My uncle was a most respectable, regular-looking person. He was well dressed, without being noticeable. He had the look of a substantial man, who did all by rule and line, and had never gone to leeward of a vagabond in his life. He had been for a great many years a member of the Dutch Reformed Church, which he took his family three miles to attend, every Sabbath, as regularly as its sun rose. You would not dream in looking at him, that an erratic thought or an unlawful impulse had ever disturbed him. And thus my gipsy ways and looks were a sore trial of his good nature.

And as I slowly made out from one day to another, that what he called good manners and wished me to cultivate, meant never inquiring about anything I did not know; never telling anything I did know to persons older than myself; never doing anything but sitting still and being dumb, I began to understand that there was likely to be a wide difference between his views for me and mine for myself. And nothing could have prevented this difference from becoming serious and painful, but one quality of mind that was common to us both, but which I had scarcely found in myself, in the sombre life which had so "cribbed and cabined" my nature in the wilderness. This was a keen sense of the ludicrous. Sometimes in his gravest remonstrances at my outlandish doings and sayings, the tones of his voice would suddenly change, and on looking up I would find an ill-suppressed smile lurking about his eyelids and the corners of his mouth. I did not in the first days understand this so well as after we had travelled some time together. And I came to it at last, less by

the aid of its repetition, than by comparing myself with other females whom I met of near my own age; but while I was pained by the extreme personal disadvantage of such a comparison with the plainest, I was often irresistibly amused when, alone, I reviewed their blank astonishment at something I had done or said, that was entirely earnest or unconscious at the time.

Here is one of many similar incidents that will illustrate my position and its difficulties in that memorable travel:

We were tired of the canal boat, and had taken the stage in the afternoon of a fine day, as we were approaching the town of Palmyra. The country was in its greatest beauty, and my uncle, when he had placed me on the back seat, which was before vacant, asked me if I were quite willing he should ride with the driver? I could scarcely understand why he should ask me so simple a question, but assented without expressing myself further, and he took his seat. I was delighted with the country and the beautiful evening, and scarcely noticed those who occupied the stage with me, till I heard them in hot dispute. There were five gentlemen, three in front and two on the middle seat. When their debate first arrested my attention I found they were talking about the history of some measure connected with the improvement of the navy, and the defence of the seaboard. Two attributed the origin of it to one set of men, and the other three disputed them, and neither party was quite right. I cared nothing about it at first, but they got very warm, and I was beginning to consider the propriety of stating its true history to them, when the stage stopped at a little village post-office. This broke off the argument for the time, but it was resumed with still more warmth after we started. Indeed they grew quite noisy, and uttered some oaths by way of attesting their correctness. When it came to this I could no longer keep silence, but looking at one of those facing me—he was the last one who had spoken—I said, at a moment when they were all still: "I believe, sir, you are a little wrong as well as the other gentle-

man. The bill you talk of was introduced into the Senate by Mr. J——, of Virginia, and when it went down to the House of Representatives it was supported by Messrs. A. B. and C.—(I had their names then at my fingers' ends)—and opposed by Messrs. D. E. and F., and it finally passed after Mr. G. had made his great speech on it."

I remember the open-mouthed astonishment with which the two next me turned quite around to look, and the others sat mute, till I had finished a considerably longer history than I can now give, of what they were speaking of; verifying it by minute statements of details which I was the better able to furnish as the measure had been a prominent one, and had interested uncle, as an "old seaman," so much that we had watched it very closely, and read everything relating to it, with unusual care and attention.

When I had said all, an elderly gentleman, grey-headed and respectable—the best man among them as I thought—said:

"Where did you get all that history, my girl?"

"From the *Globe* and the *National Intelligencer* sir."

"Do you read those papers?" he asked with a smile.

"I have always read them where I have been living, but I don't see them now." It seemed to me that I had been from home a long time.

The debate closed with my speech, for one of the men remarked, laughing:

"Don't ask me to talk politics after that; my memory is not infallible, and I have no relish for making myself ridiculous before a—judge."

I was looking out again quite indifferent to what they thought or said, but occasionally as I swept my eyes over them I found the white-headed gentleman regarding me with a most kindly and interested look; and this finally led me to notice that he had broad crape on his hat, and gave my thoughts and recollections a tinge of sadness as the golden evening darkened around

us, on the beautiful meadows, and grain-fields, and orchards that bordered our road.

A little after dark, we reached the town, and, when we alighted, for supper, the old gentleman came up to my uncle, and introduced himself, asking, in turn, to be introduced to his charge. My uncle looked a moment at him, in astonishment and doubt; but the thorough goodness and purity of his face, and the character which the whole presence of the man attested, removed his scruples, apparently, and they walked forward to where I was seated, on the edge of a chair, in the large, comfortable-looking parlor. We shook hands, as uncle said, "Eliza, this is Mr. ——, who wished to be introduced to you. This is my niece, Eliza Woodson, sir—a wild girl, whom I have just caught in the forests of the West."

"Wild or tame," said my new friend, in a pleasant tone, "she has a good deal of the real stuff in her. Take care you don't drive it out, in taming her; though, I think, it wouldn't be easy to do that; would it, Miss Eliza?"

"I can hardly tell, sir," I replied. "I don't know exactly what they are going to do to tame me."

"Well, whatever they attempt, don't let them stop you from reading to *know something;* for I see that is what you have read for."

"What I read, I always know afterwards," I said. "I never forget it."

"Well, take care of that gift, my dear. It is invaluable; but you have others equally so. The reason of my feeling so much interested in you," he said, in answer to my questioning look, "is, that you remind me of my little daughter, that I lost, last winter. How old are you?"

"Past fourteen, sir."

"Dear me! you are very small."

"I have worked very hard, sir, and couldn't grow fast, on that account."

"Been to school?" he asked.

"Not since I was six years old; but I am going now."

"That is right," he said. "Be a good girl, and study as hard as you can, and you'll be worth something some day."

I heard all he said, with a keen attention; for I thought he understood me better than anybody ever had since Henry's death. But I could not talk much to him; for I felt a little fearful and confused, between his praises and my sense of uncle's dissent from them. At length I said, "Are you going to ride with us to-night?"

"No. I live only a few miles from this town, and stop here."

"I am very sorry," I said; "for I should like very much to talk with you, by and by. At first, I feel a little afraid of a stranger; but I should get over that now, and there's nobody else in the stage I like to speak to."

I had eaten my little supper, and he took a biscuit from the table, buttered it, and laid a thin slice of cold ham between its halves. Then he wrapped it in one of the tiny napkins that lay in the plate next him, and, giving it to me, said, "Put that in your pocket, my dear. You'll be very hungry before you get breakfast."

He parted from us, at the stage door, with many kind and encouraging words, for which I felt so grateful that I could not prevent tears from filling my eyes, as we drove away. But it was dark, and nobody saw them, which I was glad of; for I did not wish uncle to feel that I could care so much for a few kind, appreciative words.

I did not meet another such person, but I was having queer passages, like this, all the way. When we arrived within forty miles, uncle was obliged to leave me with a lady of his acquaintance, and go on horseback himself, some important business demanding his presence at home the next day. This lady had spoken to him of wishing to take a young girl, and he said, privately, to me, before he went, "Eliza, I hope you will be as good a child as possible, and not do anything very wonderful while you stay here; and consider a little, in these two days, if

you would like to live with Mrs. S——. She wants a girl, about your age; and here is an excellent school, that you could go into immediately."

I had not liked Mrs. S——, so far, but the thought of the school encouraged me, and I said, "I will do my best, uncle, to please you; but I don't believe I shall like to live here."

"Well, you can think about it, and, after you have been home, we will see what is to be done."

CHAPTER XLIII.

"Enter a broad hall thereby,
Walled with cloudy whiteness;
'Tis a blue place of the sky,
Wind-worked into brightness;
Whence such corridors sublime,
Stretch with winding stairs,
Praying children wish to climb
After their own prayers."

I SPENT two days at this house. It was the first stand-point whence I began to view the new life before me. Until then, my free days had been passed as in a panorama. I had seen many pictures, and entertained many new guests, in the vague, shadowy realm of my mind, but I had become familiar with none. They had succeeded each other, as the beautiful shadows of an April day fleet over a landscape, whose life and loveliness are but half developed. Always in the foreground, however, of my dreamings, there was one object, one embodied purpose, which, quickened by a projection of my own inner life, seemed to smile down upon me, from a figure otherwise grave and thoughtful, even to severity. The Genius of Study stood there—one hand pointing outward, to the vast world that lay beyond, and the

other hanging at her side, waiting to clasp mine, and lead me onward to it. The freshest breezes played in her robes, and lifted the soft locks that lay upon her glorious brow; the stars of heaven shone about her majestic head; the great, awful secrets of the globe lay scattered and half opened at her feet.

I burned to rush forward and take my place at her side—to lose, in this sublime life, my own individual one. How deeply I pondered, how wildly I dreamed, how far I roamed over the earth, and traversed space, in those two days! Already the past was falling from me, as an old garment; its few roses bloomed upon thornless bushes; its one transcendent flower, which death had taken from me, seemed closer to my soul, in a more radiant splendor than ever before. He stood separated from the low world where I had known him. He belonged to that whither I was going.

I did not trouble myself, at this time, nor had I for a good while before, with the question of immortality. The tenderness and wisdom of that spirit were immortal to my ardent life—they had become a part of itself; and the future, into which I was drifting, was eternity to the keen faculties with which I was exploring it. All power, all greatness, all capacity to realize the dreams of the past, lay beyond the sweep of that shadowy hand. What was death, or eternity, in those moments, to a soul so hungry as mine for the actual and possible—for the glorious ideal, which I felt would become the real, could I once place my hand in the clasp of that inviting one?

With a constitution unimpaired by all the hardships I had suffered; with a nature not deadened, but sharpened and kindled into burning intensity by the long denial of its keenest desires; with a love of liberty that had outlived the bondages, material and spiritual, of the fading past, I stood, as it were for the first time, on the open threshold of my true life, held there still by the rein of outward circumstance, and only curbing by hard necessity my impatience to break over and plant my footsteps on the sacred ground.

I took little heed of the place, or the people who surrounded me. I slept in a small room at the top of the house, which was a hotel, the windows of which overlooked an indifferent landscape of unsightly hills and cramped fields. Poor, small houses were scattered thinly over them, whence issued before the full light of the long June day had come, the smoke of household care and toil. Patched and bare-footed little boys and girls came from them three or four hours later, to the little schoolhouse in the village.

I took my meals with Mrs. S—— and two young ladies who were living in the house. The servant girls sat at the same time at the other end of the table. The first day Mrs. S—— was absent, and I entirely forgot that I was to consider her and her home with any reference to my own future. I spoke to no one that day, except to ask for what I wanted. When called for at dinner, I was reported to be in my room, but I was in reality half way to the antipodes among the serfs of frozen Russia, and I must have had, I think, rather a grand look on my face when the boy came to call me, for he accosted me hesitatingly, with wide open eyes, as Miss Woodson—a sound which I had never heard before.

At the tea-table I found Mrs. S——; regal with flounces, lace, and jewelry. My eyes had never beheld a woman so well dressed. Her face was glowing, too, with the pleasure and exhilaration of a drive, and, flushed as it was with the warm sunset, she was beautiful, to me. I had before thought her too stout and full-faced to be pleasing, but, under these happy circumstances, she looked quite another woman. She sat between the two young persons, and motioned me to a seat opposite her.

"So, Miss Eliza," she said with a sprightly good-nature, "the girls tell me you have been up-stairs all day?"

"Yes, ma'am," I replied, hesitating a little, for despite the good nature, I felt that in the tone, which said that she wondered at it, and would have thought better of something else.

"Have you been sewing?"

"No, ma'am; I—I have no sewing to do."

"Reading, then, I suppose? Your uncle said you were a great reader."

"No. I have no books but one, which I have read many times already."

"Have you been sleeping, then?" she asked, apparently unable, with her active habits and temperament, to comprehend voluntary imprisonment, with idle hands, for a whole day.

"No, I have not been asleep," I answered, already feeling the difficulty of explaining myself here; "I have been—thinking."

"Thinking!" she exclaimed. "What can a young girl like you have to think of so long?"

"Of going to school," I replied—"and going home."

"Oh, yes," she said, at once accepting the skeleton of that day's life, for its warm, palpitating, expanding whole. "You want very much to go to school, I suppose; and to see your brothers and sisters. I don't wonder, child. But after you've been and seen them, don't you think you'd like to come back and live with me? You could go to school here. This is the teacher," and she motioned to the stout, healthy young woman on her right.

I involuntarily sent a quick, inquiring glance over her face. It was expressionless and cold, narrow and complacent. I did not wish to question her in words, but I knew it was expected of me to say something, and I was taking my first lesson in the insincerities. So, after a pause, I said: "Do you teach astronomy?"

"What!"

"Astronomy."

She looked a moment at me, then at the landlady, and back at me; by which time her face had expanded into something that would have been a smile but for the wonder that sobered it.

"Astronomy! No. That's about the stars, isn't it?"

I was too confused to reply myself; but our hostess said hurriedly:

"Yes, the stars and the other heavenly bodies. I learned it at the seminary."

"I never studied it," said the teacher frankly. "And there's no child in my school that would want to learn it if I had. Would you?" looking at me.

"Yes, I mean to learn it," I replied, "when I go to school; but I asked you because I wished to know the name of that large reddish star that I see almost every evening over our heads."

"It is the planet Mars, I suppose, if it is large and red," said Mrs. S——. "I have not observed it. But," she added after a moment, "astronomy is of no use to a girl."

"It would be a great pleasure," I said, "to know the stars, and all about the earth and the moon."

"I never care anything about it since I left school," she replied, "and you won't when you are a woman. Women think of other things; it's enough for them to know how to read and write well, and speak correctly, and understand arithmetic and geography. You don't expect to learn any more, do you?"

"I hope so," I answered courageously, and indeed it required some courage to talk to this large, strange woman, who was very imposing in her ornaments and full dress, which she wore very well, besides having the faculty of uttering what she said in an easy, authoritative way that seemed to express the impossibility of your differing from her. When the meal was over, she rose and asked me to accompany me to her room, which I did with a disturbed anticipation of her purpose; for already I felt clear about returning no more to this place; and already I began to feel somewhat of the pain it has always cost me to decide firmly against the wishes of others. Her room and its furniture as much exceeded what I had ever before seen as her dress. In it a young girl was sitting beside a cradle, where lay a beautiful fat baby fast asleep, wrapped in the white cloak it had worn in

the carriage. The girl rose and went out as we drew near the cradle, and the proud mother pushed the moist golden curls from the baby's brow softly, and said in a whisper, "How warm he is!"

"How handsome he is," was my word. "He is the handsomest baby I ever saw."

"Is he? Wouldn't you like to come and live with me and take care of him?"

"I must go to school."

"So you could a part of the time." We moved away to the other side of the apartment and sat down. "You could go to school three months a year for two or three years if you wished; or,"—looking into my face—"even four, if you stayed so long; but then I could not dress you so well if you did that."

Heaven! what a divorce from my heart's inmost love! What a peddling of spiritual life for tinker's rubbish! Her flounces lay spread out before me; her laces were perfect, at least to my uneducated eyes; and her jewels glittered; but they were shreds and dross—made such in the moment of that utterance. Should I exchange the great future for such as those, or something inferior to them? Should I crib my soul in such gilded bars—mere trumpery? I did not debate with myself thus, but my indignant spirit was holding some such scornful argument silently with the world at large, while she awaited my further audible speaking. At last I said, firmly: "I cannot come and live with you, Mrs. S——, because I am determined to get an education, and that will take me two or three whole years instead of the time you talk of."

A momentary look of disappointment passed over her features, and then she said, dismissing the subject: "Well, child, I am a little sorry, for, to say the truth, I rather like your looks, though you are a little—a little——

"Homely," I said, with a bitter smile, "homely and rude."

"No, no, I did not mean to say exactly that—a little dark and neglected-looking, you know. Your uncle has told me how

you have been treated, and I thought I should like to take you and dress you up and have you look nicely, like other young girls. I should not expect you to be a servant, you know."

I expressed my thanks, broken by mingled emotions which I could scarcely stifle, till I got to my own room, where it was a luxury to sit down and weep silently those tears, rare and precious as diamonds, which are the baptismal and sanctifying waters of the young, aspiring soul. When they ceased, I felt that I had won at least one of the many battles I saw before me.

CHAPTER XLIV.

"My very heart is filled with tears! I seem
As I were struggling under some dark dream,
Which roughly bore me down life's troubled stream."

When I reached my uncle's house on the afternoon of the second day, I found the family assembled in the yard before it, beneath some heavily-laden cherry-trees, waiting the slow approach of the stage, as it climbed the long hill which separated the house from the little village in which I had been born. I remembered every face on which I looked, as the vehicle stopped, except one, which had been added to the circle since I last saw it. My uncle was absent, but I was kindly received by my good aunt—a handsome, compact, active little woman, in whom a large fund of native kindness and tenderness was held in subjugation by an overgrown love of order and neatness. This was disclosed to me before I entered the house, by three things: first, a hint to my cousin, after the greetings were over, to take my trunk around to the back door, and brush it very carefully before taking it in; second, a pause at the door, to rub her own shoes on the mat, and another while she stood

upon the threshold, for me to do the same, though we had just walked across the cleanest, and most velvety of June swards, and there had been a heavy shower that morning, so that not a particle of dust had risen during my whole ride.

I knew that my young brother was at home here, and I started at every sound of steps, expecting to see him; but at last, when I gathered nerve enough to inquire where he was, I was told that he had gone away to stay until night, up in the woods. I observed my aunt smile in answering my question, as if there were something else besides the plain fact of absence in the case; and I learned what it was when at last he came, and, after staring at me with great suffused eyes, stepped slowly up, kissed me, and darted out of the door, as if I had been some fearful witch, instead of his sister—in years almost as much a child as himself, and longing for some real, close heart love, that I could take freely, and feel I had a full right to.

I followed him, and, without his intending it, heard his first words after seeing me. They were spoken to my uncle who was standing outside. "Oh, Uncle William, if I had thought she was so black, I'd have stayed till it was quite dark. What will Anna and Mary say?"

"She'll be whiter before they come," was the reply. "She is tanned by the journey; but you must not speak to her about it."

I turned and walked silently away, through the house—out at another door, and away up the hill in the field, among the trees, whose leaves, hanging motionless in the fast glooming twilight, showed me the glimmer of the June stars, as they came faintly out, one by one, in the blue air.

"How very ugly I must be!" I thought, "that my brother—the companion of my childhood, cannot look at me with the daylight." How deeply I was stung, humiliated, overwhelmed, by the consciousness of this terrible disadvantage. It was not the common desire of the young for beauty, that pleases and commands—not the craving for love, in that out-door sense (if I

may be permitted so to characterize the deepest and most universal passion of the human heart), which makes beauty or comeliness a source of rejoicing before all creatures; but it was the humblest and meekest demand of my nature—the call for household affections; for tenderness from those who bore my mother's blood in their veins, and with whose life I had looked to have my own mingle as freely and smoothly, as the waters of the little runnel flowing by my feet, did with those of the great stream below, into which they fell.

In my despair I cried to heaven. "Is there no affection for me?' When all persons and children, that I see, have somebody to love and be loved by, am I to be set aside? Is there no circle that wants me to complete it?" I began to doubt the worth of life. What would study be; all the knowledge of the world, if I had no love? Knowledge would only crown a higher wretchedness than ignorance could know. There was Mars beaming down upon me. What would it be to know all about that shining sphere if nobody rejoiced in my knowing but myself?" Thus I thought, and wept, faster and more bitterly, as I became more central in the desolation that surrounded me.

If my brother, who was in the mid-age of boyhood, was so shocked by my appearance, what would my sisters and my elder brother say to it? I had been told, repeatedly, that they were all handsome, and admired wherever they went. "Then certainly," I thought, fully realizing now, for the first time, since the great gift of freedom had been mine, the tremendous weight of my misfortunes, "then certainly, I can never be one of them. Yet, I am to live as well as they; and I will live," I said, strongly, to myself, "as large and good a life as—as such a person can. There must be something somewhere in the world that I can find and do, for which I shall be respected, perhaps even loved; and people will get used to me, as Henry did, and Mr. Radford, and Mr. Garland." I was thus obliged to strengthen myself for this battle by marshalling the very slender company of my friends, and reviewing them on this field. I did not pass

by the first one. "If such a person," I thought—"a true gentleman, accustomed to the presence of the noblest and most beautiful, could get accustomed to me so as to pity and love me, I do not care for all the world, besides. I am good enough for other people to love." I became strong in this thought, and rose up, and dried the tears of that second baptism, resolutely determined never again to suffer so deep a wound as I had that first evening, in the home of my childhood.

CHAPTER XLV.

"Oh! a sister's heart is deep,
And her spirit strong to keep
Each light link of early hours—
All sweet scents of childhood's flowers!"

WEEKS went by, each one full of interest and instruction. I was living in a new world. My brother had become reconciled to me; I found myself constantly in the presence of new people, and no longer a mere slave, but an object of more or less interest to all. To some a wonder—to others, perhaps, in some limited sense, a heroine—to my friends, I believe, alternately a puzzle and a pride. To me, every character was a study, and, as my aunt and uncle had a large acquaintance, and were very social, I had a sufficient variety to occupy me, so that I was not restless.

I took my place, which was not a hard one, in the household machine; I read, visited, and talked much with my elder cousin; who, if he did not help me greatly to new ideas and facts, had one predominant attribute, that was invaluable to my experience at that time—a broad, genial, pure, humane humor. He was tender with the depravities of mankind, and merry with their follies. He attacked the one without cruelty—the other without irreverence; but never did the kindly summer lightning

of this humor play around a character, but it searched out some little foible, or eccentricity, or weakness, to amuse itself withal.

We never had visitors, or were entertained, but I hastened to hear the verdict of this spirit; and it educated my analytical faculties, and sharpened the little native wit I had, to an edge that often delighted my teacher highly. In this play of thought and humor, I rested somewhat from my painful longings. The present was more sufficing than it had ever been, since the few happy years of my early childhood ; and though I never, for a single hour, abandoned the one purpose of my life, I was content to nourish it, without struggle, for the time.

My first letters from my sisters were congratulatory and rejoicing—filled with anticipations of our early meeting—which, however, was postponed from one time to another, till I began to fear that they were yet as far from me as they had been in my exile.

But at last they came, taking me by surprise, one still afternoon, in August. A carriage stood suddenly at the gate, and, as I looked from the window, I saw a tall, elegant young woman alight, with a countenance, figure and movement so like those of my father, that I said, involuntarily, "That must be Anna!" A heat-flush passed over my person, at the mingled recollections which instantaneously crowded my mind, called up by that resemblance. I did not move till I saw another person, very unlike the first, but, as I thought, both graceful and beautiful;—somewhat lower, considerably slighter, with a dark countenance, in which, handsome though it was, I could see a resemblance to that I looked at daily in the glass. I had crossed the yard in less time than I have written the last three words, and was alternately clasped in the arms of these women; whose tears fell upon my brown face. "Thank God!" I said ; and with devout gratitude, too, as I walked in behind them ; they were not shocked at my looks. I had, indeed, as my uncle foretold, improved somewhat in complexion ; and I had received from my aunt, and other relatives, numerous little womanly touches of something,

amounting almost to taste and grace, in my dress; my hair had been more carefully tended, but it was not yet so well dressed, but that a pair of strange hands were tutoring it that afternoon. How grateful and proud I was of the attention! It was not the white, taper, faultless hands of my fairest sister. She reclined upon my bed, meanwhile, and did her share of the questioning and answering. That first afternoon told the story of the two lives. One put her generous and loving hand to the work at once, with infinite tenderness and delicacy; apparently doing all for her own pleasure—not once suggesting, by speech, look, or deed, that she found, in my *outré* appearance, any motive. The other rested, approving, disapproving, or suggesting, but doing no more. The history of the two futures was shadowed out in those few hours of transcendent happiness. Aye, even to the close, for the working hand rested peacefully, at evening, in mine—the heart steeped in a contentment which came not to the other.

"Isn't Anna well?" I asked, after she had left us alone, "that she complains so much?"

"I believe she is quite well," said Mary, "but dear Anna *lets* herself complain sometimes, if she is a little more weary than usual, or is worried about anything. She is more sensitive than I am, or, I suppose I must say now, than we are, since we are so much alike. How very glad I am, dear Eliza, to find you so much like me."

"Oh! Mary, don't say that!" and I felt my eyes filling. "You are handsome, and I am so very homely! Yet, I believe I should have known you anywhere, by your looking so much like my face in the glass. How can we be alike, and so very different, too, I wonder?"

"We are not so very different, dear sister, as you imagine. You have been neglected, abused, and stifled so long, that you do not look as well as you will by and by, when you have been longer with those who love you."

These, and other like words, comforted me, because I knew

they came from a heart, whose affection made them seem truth to itself; but they did not much stir my hopes; which seemed to have received a more fatal, though less painful blow, from the great personal advantages of my sisters, than from the boyish thoughtlessness that had wounded me so deeply on my arrival.

Mary and I found ourselves, naturally, a great deal together, during this visit; a fact which was always explained when referred to, by the small difference in our ages. But I knew, from the first time it was mentioned in my presence, that there was as much in complexion as in age, and more in moral similarities and differences, than either; it was a long time, however, before I dared to say so. In Mary, I acknowledged a leader in all our early conversations. She had, what seemed to me, a vast store of learning—facts of history and science, that were unknown in the little by-ways where I had gleaned my few leaves of knowledge—poetry of men and women I had never heard of in the forest—passages of eloquence and beauty, that, when recited by her, seemed of more than mortal power, to lift my mind out of its imprisonment.

I unconsciously withheld myself, and drew upon her. I had, indeed, little to talk of besides myself, for I learned the first evening, when I saw her on her knees by my bedside, how widely different were our opinions and feelings in regard to religion, and I loved and reverenced her so deeply, that it was, from that moment, a forbidden subject to me. Understand, my dear friend, that the irreligion, which I refrained, out of tenderness for my sister, from expressing, was not of my nature, but of education. I had but few opinions, on subjects not personal, which I could support by arguments, that seemed worthy of my use, and this was one.

Of my very limited reading, a considerable portion, as you know, had been the writings of Paine, Voltaire, Volney, and infidel tracts of later date. My system, and its defences, were taken from these; and if I admired, as I did daily and hourly, the enthusiasm of my sister, purified and elevated, as it was, by

a clear, religious sentiment, and an expressed belief in the faith which we call orthodox, I still could not bring myself, for a moment, to think of leaving my citadel to join her. In truth, I felt no attraction to the dogmas, which I well understood to constitute so large a part of that faith—the religious sentiment which I really possessed being purely and truly natural. For a long time, therefore, the subject was never named between us, though I more than suspected she was, by some means, informed of my sad condition.

Then, she had no interest in politics, and, after brief and grateful mention of my few living friends in the land I had left, there were but two persons whom I cared to speak of, and both these were, to me, forbidden between us—one by my own feelings, the other by hers. I could not speak freely of the one soul, that had come to me in my forlornness—something always restrained me, when, perhaps, I had deliberately purposed to tell her what he had been ; and every such failure buried the sacred theme more deeply in my own bosom.

To our father I never dared allude, with any real expression of my feelings ; for an almost idolatrous affection for him was conveyed in every word of hers respecting him ; so that even my secret thoughts shocked me, and I not only suppressed them, but all inquiry that could have led us on in that direction. I had, therefore, to lop off all this large branch of my life-tree. The words of love and reverence which I longed to speak of my mother, I could not. Those of sorrow and indignation, which would have overflowed, had I ventured upon more than yes and no, in answer to the fervent outpourings of her heart, I felt constrained to suppress at any cost ; and I used, sometimes, in hearing the history of her life—which had been eventful and bitter, in some passages, as well as mine—to break violently away, and walk or sit alone, till I could be assured of my perfect self-control. "What can it mean?" I asked myself, one day, when one of the most painful of these dark pages had been opened, and I had burned with ill-suppressed anger, listening till

I could no longer trust myself to hear, and had fled to the shelter of a great hedge of currant-bushes, behind the house—"what can it mean, so good, so loving, so religious, as she is, that she does not see how terrible all this was? Is it because he was so handsome? Does that command such blind love? Then I shall never know it. Thank God! I shall have to be good, if anybody ever loves me."

I loved and admired my sister. I was proud of her. I felt rich when I thought of her. The world seemed larger and more beautiful for containing her, and I was stronger and more courageous for knowing that it did; but, nevertheless, our communion was sadly narrowed by these widely-divorced sources of thought and feeling. I endeavored, at last, to avoid them, making no allusion to the past, and as little as possible to the future, that involved them. I withdrew from both, to enjoy the present as heartily as I might; for it was to be of short duration. My brother was to come, in a few days, from New York, and they were all to return together—Anna, to meet her husband, who was expected home from sea very soon, and Mary, to the toilsome labor by which she earned her livelihood, and from which the loss of even a week's income could be ill afforded.

I was not taken much, into the counsels regarding myself. I knew that several were informally held; and I saw, by the faces, more than once, when my sudden appearance interrupted them, that there were divided opinions, but I had no clear notion of the different views that were entertained.

One evening, Mary and I had come to an open argument on the religious question, in which I, at last, with a kind of childish pride and delight in shocking her, had taken up the furthest outpost of infidelity—such a position as I have often since, with wonder and pain, seen many sensible men, and a few—thank God! only a very few—good women claim. I had been able, by this means, to loose the pent-up floods that had been accumulating within my bosom since our first meeting. I had swept wildly hither and thither, upon the dark sea of unbelief, like

what I was—a frail, presumptuous little rudderless egg-shell, vainly assuming to be a great ship, fit to sail boldly among the dangerous straits and crushing icebergs of the broad waters around us. I said there could be no God, or, if there were, he was unworthy of my respect when he permitted the best persons to suffer such awful cruelties from the worst—to be killed, indeed, by them, while they lived to enjoy the love and service of others as good as those they had destroyed. I referred to my own history, and the career of my adopted mother, and asked, if God had been the father of the fatherless, why did he not cause her to treat me more justly. Why had He brought me here, now, almost a woman in years, but so ignorant, wild, and ill-looking, that everybody in the house was frightened when I rose to do anything, or opened my mouth to speak.

More insane talk, of this sort, which it were foolish waste of time to repeat—more almost blasphemous denunciation of the Great Father, for the evil deeds of His misguided children—and then, leaving my sister, with a mournful, half-terrified gaze pouring itself from her large, clear, sorrowful eyes, over my flushed face, I fled to my own room, and, burying myself in my pillows, drenched them with scalding tears of self-accusation. They were the bitterest I had ever shed; for no good angel descended to dry them, or to still the tumultuous heart from whose very centre they seemed to force their burning way. These were not baptismal waters, that brightened and strengthened my soul—they were dark, merciless floods, that threatened to ingulf it rather. Alas! so soon had grief followed upon the footsteps of my great joy. I looked back upon the years that were gone—forward over the future; but there was no light anywhere. For the first time in one of my mental crises, I got neither help nor strength from the one grand and sacred memory of my past. I could not see, nor feel, scarce could I recall, but as a vague, unreal shadow, that sweet life, against which my own had leaned in so many seasons of sorrow, as well as hopefulness.

How long I wept, I know not, but I was awakened with the

pain still at my heart—no loving wing had been unfolded to fan it away—and there stood my dear Mary, holding a light above me, and brushing the disordered hair back from my temples. It pained my eyes, and while I hastily raised one hand to shade them, endeavoring, in the same moment, to frame some broken words of petition, adequate to the great sin I had committed against her feelings, I heard a man's footsteps enter the little room, and my quickly lifted head was folded instantly in a pair of arms. A voice of indescribable tenderness and depth, whispered in my ear, "My poor sister!" Then, in a moment, feeling my warm tears spring against his cheek, "We will have no more tears or grief to-night. Come, dress your hair, and bathe your face, and come down-stairs with me. I want to see you."

I pushed him back, to look at him. I had no recollection of seeing him but once since I was four years old, and his countenance did not dwell in my memory at all. But I felt that he was handsome—I felt it in his voice; and while Mary perversely held the light so as to throw his face in shadow, I remembered that she and Anna had told me so. But they had not told me another thing, which I discovered almost before I had turned him about, facing the light, that he was, on a lesser scale, the very image of a face it was inexpressibly painful to my heart, at that moment, to have reproduced. He read the disappointment which I *felt* settling upon my features, and said, "What! you do not like me?"

"I shall love you," I replied; "but I don't think you are so handsome as—as Mary does."

He laughed, and, pushing me gently towards the glass, with a hand on each shoulder, said, in a bantering tone, "Well, don't be discouraged, little one. I may improve upon acquaintance. Now brush these elf-locks of yours, and cool that honest brown face in a basin of water, and come down-stairs. I want to talk with you, and I have only this evening and to-morrow morning to get your whole story; for, at noon, the girls and I are to start for New York."

I asked Mary to go down with him, and leave me. I wished to be quite alone for a few minutes, to gather up and replace my scattered faculties. I deluged my head plentifully with cold water, and pressed hard upon my eye-balls, which seemed starting from their places. I brushed my "elf-locks," put a fresh collar of plain lawn about my throat—it was the best in my wardrobe, and one that Mary had given me from her little store—and set out to go down.

I walked to the door of my room, and took one step beyond its threshold. Then I turned square around and walked back; closed it behind me, placed the candle on my little table, and knelt down. It was all chaos within; not of passion, for that was past, but I had been blinded, and as yet it was not given me to see clearly, a thing I felt I must do before going into the presence that awaited me. I was not yet a part of the new life around me—and I felt this the more keenly for the shock I had given it that night—and I must, by a moment's calm endeavor, reunite myself to the old. I must, at least, touch its border, if I could not fortify myself in a central position therein. With all the love there was for me, I was burdened and bowed down with a desolation which my own hot, wicked words had brought upon my soul, and I had to take them back and, as a child, acknowledge the All-Father before I could again be tranquil or self-possessed. I prayed, I scarcely knew then, nor at this moment, how, for in my intellect I still denied God, though seeking Him in an unutterable agony of soul; but I prayed, and I remember especially for one thing—the blessed presence that had so often anchored my spirit. If he came near I could feel myself strong and calm again, and I was conscious, as I knelt and yearned for good and loving influences, of an influx into my soul that lifted it above the level of suffering and pain. Light and self-trust came back to me faintly indeed, but enough to show me my own individuality and encourage my self-respect in maintaining it.

When I joined the circle below, my brother, reproving my

ardy steps, gave me no opportunity to sit down, but putting a light shawl of Mary's which lay across his knee over my shoulders, and bidding me get a bonnet if I wanted anything on my head, said he wished me to go out with him where we could talk alone.

I did not yield for a single moment to a certain shyness which I felt about doing this (I was so unused to everything like this sort of personal attention from any one till I had received it from Mary), but throwing off the shawl, and refusing the bonnet, I placed my hand upon his offered arm and we walked into the yard. It was already late, and the waning moon paled into a glimmering cloudlet, over against the slowly opening gates of the summer day, before the last words were said.

"I have kept you too long, sister, I know, but I had to learn all before I could see what is best to be done with you. Come in now and let us sum up. It will soon be day, and after that I shall have to run about to see everybody before we start."

We entered the house softly. There was a lamp burning feebly, with a great sheet glowing in the flickering flame, which went out with the mere breath of the opened door. I took it in my hand and stepped back to place it outside.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To put the lamp outside. I can't endure the smoke."

"Good! Neither can I. Now come and sit down here if you can find me. Never mind about another light. We can talk in the dark.

I went to the voice and sat down. "Now," he began, laying his hand upon my shoulder, "let us recapitulate. In the first place, here you are well on in your fourteenth year, and as ignorant of everything, except geography, and politics, which you ought to know nothing about, being a girl, as the horse I rode up here."

I winced a little at this comparison, but he tightened the clasp with which he held me silent, and went on:

"But you wish so much to learn, and they tell me you are so

smart (it was the first hint, by the way, I had ever got of the estimate in which I was held), that I shall send you to school if I live."

I would have interrupted him, but he held me with the pressure of his hand, which was very powerful for so slight and delicate a one.

"Mind, I am yet but a poor clerk. I sell my time for six hundred dollars a year (it seemed an immense sum to me), and when all my expenses are paid, and a few presents made to poor Molly, who has to work very hard, there is not much left, but you shall go to school for all that.

"You want to ask when, now; I know you do. I can feel the question coming out of you."

And, indeed, he seemed to have a sense by which, if he touched me, he could read my inmost thoughts. In the whole night's walking and sitting beneath the stars, he had held my hand upon his arm or had his upon me, and he had often, in the progress of our talk, startled me by declaring that I was thinking certain thoughts or feeling certain emotions, which I supposed the shrewdest person could not have guessed at. Nevertheless, he had not penetrated to the inmost heart of the past. The real help I had had in those trials, which called down his execrations upon my oppressor and kindled his sympathy for me, he heard no hint of, and, though sometimes in his searching question and keen analysis I trembled lest he should divine it, the whole inquiry passed without an allusion to it.

Some spirit may ask why I withheld it; and I can only answer, that I did it from an instinct awakened by some quality in him which made me feel that he could not, or would not, understand what it had really been to me. A blaze of raillery had broken out two or three times in our conversation from which I shrunk with a sensitiveness he immediately detected, and when once I asked, in connection with my prolonged stay in the woods, if they were disappointed at my not returning with our father, he had replied in such a way as to convince me that the reasons

that were potent with me, would have been chaff to him, if it had suited him otherwise, to come. This again pained me, and I learned then never to look more for sympathy or understanding in that great trial of my exile.

When I had ventured upon asking him where he had lived since our father's death, his reply—"in a boarding-house, where I did before"—both pained and pleased me. I was glad that he had done so, and sorry that there was reason for my gladness.

After this long parenthesis I must beg you to go back to the school topic, which we left at its commencement.

"I cannot," said my brother, "tell you just when this shall come about; *but it shall*, and while you are waiting I wish you to be as docile as a lamb. Do whatever is asked of you, and do not dissent from any proposition about disposing of your time or yourself, for the next year. Maybe I shall not be able to take you in charge for all that time. Whatever opportunities you have you had better improve in reading or study, and a year hence, if we cannot do it sooner, you will yet be young enough to enter school.

"You may as well say nothing about it," he added, "unless to Molly. She will understand it, but there are a great many people who would think it a very foolish use to make of money, and some, who feel they have a right to direct us, would perhaps scold."

So! it was still conflict. In the wilderness I had fancied that the wide, open world, which I should some day reach, was checkered with smooth, flowery paths of freedom and ease, wherein I could walk, after my just inclinations, joyously and unblamed. But here was still struggle, and how hardly, if at all, should I reach the long-sought road to the kingdom of thought. I sat silent, saddened by these words—scarcely at that time strengthened by the great promise they contained. Life, as I looked forward to it from that dark room, seemed to be losing its beautiful and cheering aspect, and resolving itself

into one continuous battle. Even the anticipated and promised good was far off, and the road by which alone I could approach it, acknowledged to be most difficult. How my heart cried out for rest. How I wished, in the physical and spiritual weariness of the hour, that I had never been.

Already faint day-streaks were visible from the window near which we sat. I could see my brother's figure but not his features, and I remembered that even yet he was personally a stranger to me. It would perhaps have been possible for me to meet and pass, without recognizing him. I wished to be alone and rest awhile before the day commenced, so I rose to my feet, and kissing the forehead, which I felt warm and smooth beneath my hand—I knew how white and symmetrical it was; what a contrast to my dark, angular, uneven front—I said: "I am going to rest, and think of what we have said. I am glad we have talked so long alone. I shall not thank you now for what you have promised me, but I will try to deserve your kindness and afterwards to repay it."

He did not speak; some stealing tenderness, which either had not come to him before or had been suppressed, shook him slightly, and, when I laid my cheek against his, it brushed away a warm tear-drop.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"Even now I hear, with inward strife
A motion toiling in the gloom—
The spirit of the years to come
Yearning to mix itself with life."

In the morning the house was early astir, with the note of preparation for their departure, which, it was fortunately recollected, would have to be two hours earlier than the usual time, in order to meet some change of arrangement in running the

stage. My cousin, of whom I had seen but little during these visits, was to drive them three or four miles to the next village, through which the stage passed. I saw no more of my brother until three minutes before starting, when he beckoned me into the yard. It was the first time I had been near him by daylight, and we both examined each other very closely; but while he was doing it, and I was more especially considering the intense clearness and sharpness of his dark grey eye, which I thought the evening before was blue, he was hurriedly saying to me, "I have been away all the morning, making calls on our relations; and their united wisdom has decided to make a *Milliner of you!* Don't object—do anything they ask, till I can come or send for you. Do you think you could ever learn to make a bonnet?"

"Oh, no," I exclaimed, "I know it would be impossible. I can't even put a ribbon over one without making it look ridiculous. I know I never could learn to make a bonnet that people wouldn't laugh at."

"I know it too," he said, "you never shall; but just be as meek as a discharged deacon; that's all. A milliner, indeed!" he muttered, scanning my face; "that don't look much like the stuff they are made of."

"It ought to be handsome," I said.

"Yes, it ought to be handsomer than it ever will be, for that; but that is no reason that something else good can't be made of it;" and with the word he darted into the house, to take leave of the family. My sisters stood ready to get into the carriage. We had had much pleasant talk in the morning, and Mary, to whom I had confided the secret of our long interview, had encouraged me greatly. When I kissed them, they both said they should see me soon again; and I believed it, as they doubtless did; but it was nearly seven years before my eyes were again gladdened with the sight of Mary's countenance; and then it was in a land far away from where we stood that morning.

Many days of utter dreariness passed over after this parting.

I took again my appointed share in the exact household tasks. The bright, painted floors of the common rooms, were to be washed daily with milk, and the cloth used therefor was not only clean enough, but white enough to have been used about the neatest table. Every small spot where the paint had been removed, was to be scoured twice a week, with small particles of sand, used upon a cloth, strained over the tip of the finger. It was an especial triumph of skill, not to exceed the bounds of the bared spot, and at the same time, to bring that to a state of the utmost whiteness, possible to pine wood. On every Saturday there was general cleaning, from the lumber room in the garret to the remotest dark corner of the cellar. Doors were opened which had not swung on their hinges since the last sweeping-day, and every inch of superficies carefully cleaned down, with broom, brush, and duster. At first, these household revolutions were very tedious to me, because I saw that, in fact, nothing was done with all the ado they caused; but I soon learned to take part in them mechanically, and to sweep and dust, and rub floors, walls and furniture over and over, without being able to detect the slightest difference between the *ante* and *post* conditions of those hardly used articles. My aunt prophesied all manner of good from my docility and neatness, and one day came near disclosing the awful fact that I had at first, been considered hopeless.

"We shall be able, I do believe, to make a woman of you, *after all*," she said.

I did not ask what were the difficulties that had been reckoned so near impossibilities, but in my own mind I said, presumptuously, "I shall make a *woman* of myself—not a sweeping and scouring machine." I think I was not amiable in those days. I felt myself detained, and I stayed there as quietly as I could, my whole nature in hourly protest. I had looked forward to this position, but it was, I thought, almost as fruitless of good as the previous one. Here I was not in any way oppressed—but no spiritual life in all the circle that surrounded

me was related to mine. I lived in my own shell, thirsting and hungering as before. This naturally discouraged me. I had no experiences of any sort in this negative life, and could, I believe, have been grateful for a downright, honest misery, if it had come with power to stir me out of my level apathy. In the universe there can be nothing containing life and sensation, so tiresome as a sea of glassy smoothness, reflecting the sunshine of successive days, and the unbroken starbeams of still nights. No rage of the elements but would be welcome to us, rushing over and stirring the inert waters.

A little breath of change came to my calm after a while. "Eliza," said my aunt, one morning, after an early breakfast, "I wish you to prepare to go over to King's Hollow with me this morning; I am going to Miss Burt, to see if she will take you to learn the trade."

I do not know if she thought I had already been apprised of this intention, that she named it so abruptly, but I let it pass, and simply said, "What time, aunt?"

"As soon as we can get ready. We will walk over in the cool of the morning."

King's Hollow was a small village about three miles distant. I had come through it on my way home, and never seen it since. I remembered it, a neat, smart-looking place—fresh painted, with rows of poplars, straight, solemn, and exact, wherever they could be placed—never by any chance an odd one—and a great, brawling, mountain stream, rushing, and foaming along its rocky bed, through the very centre of the village. It was the same that ran through our village, and the road lay beside it all the way, except in the little short curves the water made occasionally, in hunting its channel among the rocks that opposed it. The valley of the stream was very narrow, and on either hand rose the Catskills, clothed, at that time, to their summits, with hemlock and pine, whose sombre, heavy green was enlivened by an occasional maple, strutting in scarlet, or a beech flaunting its pale orange robes in boastful gaiety.

My heart gladdened at thought of the walk. It seemed as if nature suddenly presented herself to me, as a neglected friend, who might have helped me before, had I sought her aid. It was a glorious autumn morning, and the liquid dew yet glistened upon the short, scant, herbage of the roadside, when we set out. I had no time to loiter, or dream by the way, much as I wished for an hour alone, by the water and the woods, for my good aunt walked, as she did everything else, with all her might. We had little conversation, and I did not once inquire what sort of a person Miss Burt was, how I was to live, how long to stay, or anything else. It seemed of no consequence to know either the one or the other, for as I watched the yellow leaves, hurrying down the stream, sometimes madly, and again apparently thrown aside, to lie still in some pool till the frost should lock them up there for the winter, so it seemed to me, was I making a random voyage down the stream of time. I only hoped there might not be too much stagnant water by the way.

CHAPTER XLVII.

"Thy feet shall walk in other paths than these."

"She hath a low, sweet voice."

Just as we entered the village of King's Hollow, a sturdy Dutchwoman joined us from a comfortable-looking house by the roadside. She was walking down the street, she said, and would "co mit us." She eyed me sharply, and said something in her vernacular, to my aunt, which, being responded to in the same, brought me another good, long, scrutinizing gaze.

"And so you vants to pe a meclener, eh child?" she said, addressing me.

"No," I replied, "I don't care to be. My friends wish it, and so I shall try."

"Ah, vat den you likes te pe? Tailor?"

"No."

"Dressmaker?"

"No."

"Vork in te house, may pe den?"

"No," I said, persisting, as I was answering to my likes and dislikes, in doing so honestly, though I afterwards discovered that every one of my replies were turned against me, in a way that might have been most disastrous, had my sole chances of success in life, depended upon acquiring and pursuing any one of these useful trades in the village of King's Hollow. For my catechiser was the town gossip—a notable Dutch housewife, whose religion was labor, and who believed that without such work as she did, or required to have done, there was no salvation of body or soul. We parted at the door of the milliner's shop, where we lingered a moment, rubbing our shoes, and preliminarily adjusting our shawls and bonnets. My aunt told me in a tone of displeasure that I ought not to have answered as I did; and that I must not say again I did not wish to learn a trade, nor do housework either, unless I wished to get a bad name through the whole country. "It won't be fifteen minutes," she added, "before the tailor and dressmaker will hear all about you; and by noon the whole village will know that you have come here to learn a trade, and are so lazy that you don't want to do anything."

I was quite dismayed at these results of a few honestly-spoken words; but I had no time to reply, for I was immediately ushered into the shop, and introduced to Miss Burt as "My niece, the girl I spoke to you about."

Miss Burt's face and manner took a great burden from my spirit at once. God be praised for every such pure, tender and sweet face, with which he has adorned this abused world! Such gentleness and goodness were expressed there, that I felt not only

willing, but anxious, to stay with her. If anything could have won me to a love of the fripperies and nothings of so unsubstantial an art, it would have been that face; and her voice doubled the welcome assurance. The alacrity with which, upon her invitation, I laid aside my bonnet, which looked ruder and poorer than it ever had before, surprised and pleased my aunt, who went on talking over my position (there), and her wishes in regard to me; so that I then first learned that I was now upon trial, for a week or fortnight, as she might feel disposed—at the end of which, if I continued, I was to enter upon my year of apprenticeship. I was to live with herself and her mother, who kept the house, and was to make myself generally useful, in the times when I was not employed in the shop.

I assented to all, so far as I was required to, with a cheerfulness which evidently pleased my good, thrifty, care-burdened aunt very much, and after resting an hour or so, and seeing me seated behind the counter at the back end of the shop, needle and work in hand, she took her leave, saying she should expect to see me home on Saturday for a change of clothes, and to spend the Sabbath, if Miss Burt was willing.

There was a long silence after the door closed. I had the frill of a brown battiste bonnet, which I was trying to hem with a blind stitch, that, alas! hardly ever would be blind, unless to eyes in the same condition. While I sat, nervously driving the needle into my finger, and looking carefully at every stitch on the right side, as I drew the thread through, I was mentally wondering over two unsolved questions, which I had to wait for time to answer. "What sort of old lady," I thought, "is the mother?" who was, at the time, moving quietly about the adjoining back room; "and what shall be the first words we shall say?" The longer we sat still, the more nervous I grew; and at length, in sheer desperation, I determined to break the silence.

"Will those stitches do, Miss Burt?" I asked, reaching my work forward for inspection.

"Pretty well for a beginning," was the gentle reply.

"Perhaps you are a little tired from your walk, and would better rest till after dinner. Would you like to go out in the kitchen, and see my mother?"

"Yes, if you please;" for I did want to get up and feel the strangeness of my position relieved, by seeing at once all that I had to see.

Miss Burt rose, and I followed her. She seemed younger in figure and movement, than when I had only seen her face; and this made me feel, with a sort of reverence, that she must have suffered some great sorrow, which had saddened her countenance prematurely. She opened the door, and said, "Mother, this is Eliza Woodson, the young girl, you remember, that our friend, Mrs. Page, spoke about. She has come to stay awhile with us."

They were clearly mother and daughter. The same purity of countenance was in both; the same *subdued* sensibility, the same gentleness. The old lady courteously placed a chair for me in her neat little kitchen, in which there was already a savory smell of dinner; and, after a few words between them, which I avoided hearing, the daughter left us. She was called Theresa. I answered the mother's questions, and, when the cloth was spread, begged permission to lay the table, anxious to get upon my feet, and feel the constraint of ceremony removed. They were very social at dinner, with, occasionally, a pleasant word or question to me; and by tea-time, I seemed, without any effort of my own, or theirs, to be incorporated into the family.

I admired these women very much, and almost envied them their harmonious, beautiful lives. "It would have been easier," I thought, "to give up going to school, for such a home as this, and the ability to maintain it, than for anything I had ever seen."

I was wiping the tea-things, and Mrs. Burt and Theresa were sitting in their little parlor, which opened into the kitchen and shop both, when there came a rap at the front door (the cur-

tains having been let fall at dark, made the house a private one), and Miss Burt, opening it, let in the stout woman—the roadside gossip of the morning. Her Dutch accent, hard voice, and heavy person and features, seemed all exaggerated, by contrast with her entertainers. I suspected, from the first sight of her, that she had come to enlighten these ladies with regard to my delinquent tastes; and I was convinced of it when, after a few commonplaces about the weather and neighborhood affairs, she rose, and, walking to the door that led into the kitchen, closed it.

In a few moments Miss Burt reopened it, with a quiet smile upon her face, and said: "When you are done, Eliza, come and sit down with us."

"Thank you," I said; and I must have looked grateful, I know, for I felt how very good it was in her to pay no heed to the tale she had heard, and to invite me to silence my own traducer. She did not stay long, after I joined them; and when she left, Miss Burt courteously excused herself from attending her to the door. She sat and talked with me—her inquiries evidently shaped by what she had heard, but her mind wholly unprejudiced.

The good mother reclined upon a stiff, high-backed sofa, and dozed after the first few minutes. I answered many questions, —among others, why I did not wish to be a milliner, or tradeswoman of any sort? why I had determined, notwithstanding, upon trying to please my relatives? and why I had come hither, without a word of explanation to my aunt?

"I know Mrs. Page very well," said Miss Burt, "and you were right, I think, not to attempt to argue the point with her. She is a most worthy and excellent woman, but she would scarcely feel the weight of the reasons you have stated to me. Of course, with these views and feelings, it would be useless for you to remain here; but not to displease your friends, you shall, if you like, stay with us until Saturday, and then, I think, I can write your aunt a note, which will settle her mind about it.

I thanked her, as I felt, very gratefully, and we were friends at once. And though I never saw her after the day I left her house, to go home, I have still her face, figure and voice preserved in my memory, as perfectly as if I had seen them yesterday. I was crude, and ill qualified to appreciate a noble woman in that day; but her virtues and loveliness left an impression on my heart, which I shall carry undiminished, through the long picture gallery of life."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

"Of the aims in life that bound us,
Few there are too high to reach;
And there's nothing that's around us,
But has yet a song to teach."

Pass over a year. An autumn, winter, spring and summer have successively clothed and unclothed the earth, and at last I have overtaken that hunted future, beyond which I care not to look. I have slipped the leash that held me back, and here I stand, side by side with that mighty spirit, whose image, clear and perfect, has been so long daguerreotyped upon my soul. I am at school! The gates that were so inexorably closed, have opened at last, and I stand upon consecrated ground.

Somewhat has gone before this, however, that it were well to refer to. A long and rigorous winter, endless nights, and clear days of unbroken frost, for weeks together—close housing, but little labor, and great indulgence in books, fires and lights. Well and thankfully, on many days of the eventful years that have since passed, have I remembered that indulgence—the luxury of enjoying, undisturbed, the lengthened evenings, sitting near the great, roaring farmhouse fire, a little aside from the bustle and chat of the family circle; which lessened with the

advancing hours, and was, finally, reduced to myself and the kind, generous household father; who, having caused an ample pile of wood to be deposited at the chimney corner, and inspected the careful closing of the doors, departed last, with injunctions not to sit *too late*, and, above all, not to let the fire go down, so as to take cold.

Here I first learned what a novel was, and sat more than one night from dark till broad daylight—too much absorbed, sometimes, to remember the mortal necessity of sleep—too much wrought upon, at others, by the horrors of my book, to dare a single step in the silent house, much less a journey through its low, wide rooms, and zig-zag passages, to my sleeping-chamber.

The books of those days, though they are but twenty-five years past, were very different from ours of this time. They were very much more expensive, consequently scarcer. They were all bound in heavy boards or leather. No stacks of cheap novels and bewitching monthlies accumulated then in spare chambers, or were huddled upon misses' tables, mixed up with class-books, bibles and psalmodies. A book was a book then; a distinct and endurable creation which the whole household respected. They were property, and came at rare intervals like other expensive purchases. Variety was of course out of the question, except to the wealthy; and I found afterwards that I had been particularly fortunate in enjoying two histories—Rollins' and Robinson's "Charles Fifth;" three novels terrible; one ditto heroic; one sentimental, and one amorous, of which the whole catalogue stands thus: Of the class terrible there was, first (shade of Mrs. Radcliffe pardon the precedence): "The Three Spaniards," "The Mysteries of Udolpho," and "The Secrets of the Castle of Otranto." The representative hero came to me in the person of Rinaldo Rinaldini; I wept duly over the tender sorrows of Amanda Malvina and Lord Mortimer; and wearied my well-developed pectoral muscles over the highly-wrought ludicrous distresses of Dorcasina Sheldon.

Each and all of these creations, were, for the time, as real to

me as Mithridates, or Alexander, or Charles. The words "founded on fact" were a substantial indorsement which I took as unquestioningly as your banker accepts the name of Mr. Cresus, and having once given the weight of verity to one tale, I could not withhold it from another equally well told. The only evidence which I could have received against it, would have been poverty of imagination in the author, or feebleness in bringing out the figures of his piece, and in graving their lines sharply enough to secure them instant recognition.

For the broken and serious hours, I had Cowper and Burns; and committed to memory innumerable gems of song and poesy from the latter, which have dwelt with me in all the changes of after life, and which are always irresistibly associated with the idea of a pure, starry light, which was then coming, with steadily increasing lustre, into my soul. I passed hastily, sometimes shudderingly, over his irreligious poems, epistles and satires. They seemed a desecration of his sacred gifts; and, incapable as I then was of understanding how they could come from the same soul whence had flowed the holy lines of the "Cotter's Saturday Night," and the tearful verses to "Mary in Heaven," I used to wish that the book was mine, that I might seal up the pages containing the unworthy satires, and never see them more —forget if possible that they were.

CHAPTER XLIX.

"Bring a shadow green and still
From the chestnut forest,—
Bring a purple from the hill,
When the heat is sorest,—
Spread them out from wall to wall,
Carpet-wove around,—
Whereupon the foot shall fall
In light instead of sound."

Thus the winter grew with me into spring, and how happy I was then, carrying my own enlarged life abroad into the fields and forests of growing beauty. There was a bank of daffodils, on which, and on the still lake beside them, the vernal sunshine poured itself, from early morning till the shadows of the low western hills stretched thither nursing their green and golden splendor with a lavish, yet careful hand. The leaves had not come out on the arms of the great overshadowing trees. It was the very spot Wordsworth might have seen—the same flowers, water, trees, and hills; and came back like a painted picture before me, years after, when first I read those exquisite lines of his. And the shadows of the spring clouds lay on the brown slopes, in little shifting patches, upon whose lines I used to delight to walk, and fancy myself treading the islands of the sweet air.

I revelled in my own growth as well as in that of the season. How much I knew which I had never before known! How were my circles of thought enlarged and multiplied. They began to approach, and I fancied, to touch each other. I could see shadowy points of contact between my historical and my political spheres; between my poetry and my fiction, and it seemed to

me that I could almost, at a step, pass from one to the other, without descending to the external and negative world; as I sometimes could, at a great leap, spring from one cloud shadow to another. So I grew with the growing year, happy—secure that no more seasons of wintry death or sterility awaited me. I had reached up and seized upon the enduring pillars of thought, and I felt I had a hold which could not again be loosed. It was more like that memorable time when I had *proved*, against my fearful doubts, the proud possession of mental sanity, than any other experience I had ever had. I was rich, therefore, in those days, though in worldly gear little better than a pauper.

CHAPTER L.

"There's buxom health, of rosy hue;
Wild wit, invention ever new;
And lively cheer of vigor born;
The thoughtless day, the easy night,
The spirits pure, the slumbers light
That fly the approach of morn."

In June came a letter for me, from my brother (postage was higher then, and letters fewer than at this time), of which the last paragraph ran thus:

"So you see that with my own economy, and poor Molly's refusing to take a little marriage present from me, I am now nearly ready to put you on the course. Excuse the figure, but I expect you to run famously. You will have to work hard, and be a very poor scholar, which will not perhaps injure your chances of success, after all. I shall be up in August to plant you for a year or two in some schoolmaster's garden. Till then good bye. "Your affectionate brother,

"John E. Woodson."

"P. S.—Consult the Goodies thereabouts and see if you can make choice of a school before I come."

I sat long alone that night, beside the brook in the meadow—dreaming, hoping, resolving; grasping as it were, with the untried sinews of my half-developed thoughts, to prove their power, and measure them for the labor before me. I did not on the whole distrust myself, but the heart-strokes seemed to reach to my finger-ends when I remembered what he would expect of me, and what I should demand of myself. And there came to me then, with a strange and kindling influence, that vivified every faculty of my nature, those words, spoken long ago down by the great raft, "when you get to school you will learn so rapidly, that if your health is good, what other scholars are three or four years in doing, you will do in one or two." I accepted them as a prophecy, and thus they became an inspiration. I was full of health and strength, and I would do all this.

Before John came, a school was selected, subject to his approval, for I had no choice, knowing literally nothing of any, and feeling that to get entrance to any one, was blessing sufficient for this life. It was a Friend's boarding-school, an old institution enjoying high credit with those staid, quiet people, and much patronized by others.

That sect had recently undergone the famous agitation which divided it into Orthodox and Hicksite branches; and these distinctions were carefully kept up in discussing the respective merits of their several schools, but to me it was all one, and would have been though one had borne the name of Mahomet and the other of Budha. In due time all was arranged. The clothes that I had not on, were put into the least of all possible trunks—and yet there was room—and with nothing but that small chattel, I was set down at the gate of the Temple, on the afternoon of the 9th of August, 183–. My brother had been unable to come, as he promised, and I was taken along by a visitor at our house—an elderly gentleman who had to pass the school on his return home, and who, esteeming the ceremony of introduction a vanity of the world, placed my little box upon the wagon-block beside me, and drove on his way.

"I am not to stand here," was the first conclusion of my mind in answer to the mental question, "What shall I do next?" I stepped down to the ground. I had not yet seen any one, and I hoped no one had seen me, for I was ashamed and indignant, and, little as I knew of the world, felt that I had a right to be so, at being thus rudely left to make my own way among people I had never seen. On looking about me, I observed with real thankfulness that the windows of a building on my right, whence a certain drowsy sound of voices issued, were covered all over the lower sashes with the clambering vines of the May rose; and that the house-blinds on my left were closed. I hesitated for a moment which to go first to, but luckily decided upon the dwelling, and walking straight up to the door, I knocked as resolutely as my trepidation would let me, upon its dark painted panels. It was promptly opened by a middle-aged woman, with a cold, grey eye, which seemed to be all surface.

She held it (the door) in her hand, and hammered me with the stony eye, while I hesitatingly accosted her in the politest form I could remember, and told her I had come to school, according to the letter of my brother, Mr. Woodson, had written Mr. Barton, from New York. Upon this I was invited within; my bonnet removed—I had no such superfluities as gloves, or shawl, my shoulders being simply covered with a small round cape of white muslin, which was a gift from Mary—and myself seated upon a broad-bottomed, straight-backed settee of board, painted yellow. I trembled all over, but could not rest myself against the back, nor touch my feet to the floor; so I sat upright, bathed in the vapor of an intense excitement, and answered the questions which were put to me. They were spoken in a voice which was low, not from fashion or feeling, but from an educated stiffness which mechanized the speaker's frame, and made every voluntary muscle, aye, and the involuntary ones, too, as far as could be done, the instruments of an irrepealable code of propriety.

In my turn, I ventured upon a few questions touching the school—the number of scholars, the number of girls, and, above all, how long it took one to go through the school. I knew that a college course was four years, and that there were other schools where scholars accomplished the course of study, or were expected to, in a given time, and I thought it might be so here. But I was told that there were scholars there who had been in the school seven years, nearly all the time, and were not yet ready to leave it. These, she said, were lazy, dull students; and she thought a bright boy or girl, beginning with a tolerable elementary education, ought to go as far as they taught, in two years, or two and a half, at the most.

"Had I brought a trunk with me?"

"Yes; it was on the wagon block."

"At recess," she said, "I will have some of the large boys bring it in."

"Oh, no," I said, hastily, feeling terribly the discrepancy between the strength of two of the large boys, and the mere toy-box that contained my possessions—"oh, no; it is small; I can bring it in myself." And I darted away, to capture and conceal the thing, before any one should see it. I literally flew out and back, lest the recess should come suddenly, and I be surprised with it in my hand.

"This way," she said, when I entered, leading me up a lead-colored painted stairway, and into a room containing three beds. "Thee will sleep here, and this is thy bed. Put thy trunk down at the foot of it."

I did so, with a keen sense of relief when it was partly concealed by the foot-curtain, or the fall of the bed-cover.

While I was being instructed in the rules of the lodging-rooms—not a loud word to be spoken after nine o'clock; no jumping or running ever to be done there; beds to be made immediately after the morning school, before breakfast; no soiled garments ever to be left out of the dirty-linen basket, which stood in a deep angle of the passage outside—a great

outburst of noise came across the yard—the sound of running feet and girls' voices ; and I trembled, as if an insurrection had suddenly broken out, and these were the dangerous insurgents, marching up to take my life. They dashed into the house, up the stairs, and into all the rooms, like so many embodiments of a modified whirlwind ; but those who entered the apartment where we were, became suddenly as motionless and silent, when they saw us, as if they had repeated, there and then, the experience of Lot's wife.

My sense of the ludicrous was irresistibly touched by this sudden transformation, which, I instantly saw, was due solely to the unexpected and surprising presence of my companion. I could have laughed most heartily, and came very near doing so, in spite of the pinchings of propriety ; for I felt a fellowship in these young spirits, very different to that I should have experienced in private life. One, the most brisk and mischievous-looking of them—a very dark brunette, with glittering black eyes—was the first to speak.

"Oh, excuse us, Huldah, please. We didn't know you were here."

"It ought to make no difference whether I am here or not," was the reply. "It isn't becoming in girls to make so much noise anywhere. Here," she said, turning to me, "is Eliza Woodson, a new scholar ; and she ought not to see such rude behavior the first day she is here."

That was a time when I wished to speak ; for I did not think it rude at all. It was just as I liked to do myself, sometimes, after sitting still. I was introduced to the girls in a body; for, by the time we had reached that point in the proceedings, they had gathered in from all the other rooms, to see what had produced the sudden silence in ours. Mrs. Barton, or Huldah, as they called her, passed out from among us, with a parting injunction to quietness—the saving virtue of her sect ; and half a dozen of the rebuked gathered about me, instantly, and, without any rudeness, asked again my name, which they had not

distinctly heard—where I came from, and if I was going into school that afternoon.

I thought not. I should like to see the teacher first. So I seated myself at the window, after they had all gone down, to the sound of the bell, and endeavored to realize the glory of my position.

In a few moments, there was another great outbreak below—shouting and tramping of feet. It was the boys' recess. My window was at the opposite end of the house from the school, but I heard steps on the flagged walk below, and, putting my head out, I saw three or four boys walking quietly, as if secretly, around, to enter the kitchen door. They presently returned, and were followed half way up the broad stone steps, by a fat, good-looking, almost handsome woman, who was laughingly driving them before her, each with a hunch of bread in his hand. It was evidently a secret expedition; for they spoke in suppressed voices, which I could not have heard but for my window being directly above them.

"You are first-rate, Elizabeth," said one of them, munching his crust. "I like you, and always shall."

"Go along!" she replied, "and don't talk about always liking me. You won't remember me round the corner of the house. Only keep that bread out of sight, I tell you. If you don't, it'll be the last you'll get from me."

They went quietly away, and I drew back, feeling that I was making tolerable progress in what the lawyers call the *animus* of the case.

CHAPTER LI.

"I have a will shall master all and each,
As you who may, shall see in time."

At supper, I was seated somewhere among the sixteen girls; and the thirty or forty boys were ranged on each side of the long table, below us. Mr. Barton—whom we were expected always to address by his Christian name of Benjamin—sat at the lower end; the larger boys nearest him, and the little ones fell off, by regular gradation, up to where they joined the rows of girls. I was too far off to see the principal's face with any satisfaction, so I looked at those near about me, and kept very silent. That was the rule of the table, unless we were addressed by one of the figures at either end. Our supper consisted of tea, with bread, and bad butter, which I only tasted; for I had a constitutional abhorrence of any oleaginous substance that was not sweet and pure.

After supper, we were at liberty to retire to the dormitories; but I was soon sent for, to come to the sitting-room—the one where I had first been received—to see Benjamin. Though glad of this summons, I went, to answer it, with some trepidation, which, however, was much relieved by one of the girls saying to me, as I was going out, "You needn't be afraid of him. He's as good as sunshine. You'll like him, right away."

I went down-stairs, and found myself in presence of a man past middle life, as I thought, with dark, well-preserved hair, rather large features, which were not the least gross, however; and a mouth, and eye, and forehead so unmistakably kind and good, that I felt my self-possession return at once. He motioned me to a seat beside him, and said, "I want to have a little talk

with thee, my dear, before we go into school in the morning. Thy brother wrote me that thou hadst not been to school since thou wert very small."

"No, sir," I replied.

"Thou hast no need of 'sir,' in addressing me, my dear."

I corrected myself, and said that I had not been permitted to attend school since I was five years old.

"Hast thou not studied since?"

"A very little. I have read some books—all that I could get."

"Ah! I see thou art self-instructed. That is better than ignorance, my dear. But what dost thou want to study now?" he said, smiling very kindly on me, and speaking as if the question were intended rather to draw me out, than to call for an answer which he would trust in directing my course.

"I should like to study everything," I said, feeling the impossibility of choosing for myself.

"Not all at once, my dear; not all at once."

"No; but as fast as I can."

"Yes, yes. We will see. But if thou wilt take my advice, thou wilt begin moderately at first. Nothing is gained by overdoing at the start. Thou wilt read, write, cipher, study geography, and spell. Those I think will do to begin with. Dost thou agree?"

"Yes, sir," and then hastily omitting the superfluous particle, "yes, I agree until we see that I can do more," which I knew would be shown the first day. For already I was pronounced a very good reader, my spelling was faultless, and the geography as familiar to me as the letters of my own name, so that in fact I had only the writing (very much needed) and the figures, left for real work.

In the morning, after a sleepless night, I rose before the early bell, leaving the girl who shared my bed, fast asleep, and walked down-stairs. I longed to hear the signal that should call me to my work. Nobody was moving without, yet, and I took several

turns up and down in the arbor that ran from the house to the school, while I was mentally engaged in taking soundings of my position. Presently I heard a heavy footstep in the school building, and a moment after, the first wavering stroke of the bell, which was rung long and loudly. Before it stopped, both houses seemed to have received a flood of life, as the dry earth receives the tumultuous rain of a sudden thunder-storm. Fifty or sixty bodies, each apparently furnished with a nimble tongue, had been brought into perpendicularity and motion by those sounds. It was very inspiriting, and I took in courage and impatience with every breath. Retreating to the sitting-room, I met Benjamin, who, after a good-natured word of congratulation on my early rising, told me that he should be absent that morning, but the teacher would give me the books I wanted, and in the afternoon he should be in the school himself.

I sat still through the ante-breakfast session—at an empty form—sustaining, with what coolness I could, the fire of all the eyes that belonged to the bodies aforementioned. Lazy scholars took it easily, and eyed me over without the pains of disguising their occupation. Studious ones read, alternately, their lessons and my face. I heard the recitations and readings, scrutinized the teacher, and felt, when we were dismissed, very much as I imagine one does who has been plunged into a stream, and on rising and shaking the water from his person, congratulates himself that it was not nearly so bad as he had dreaded it would be.

I had seen nothing that I did not feel myself able to do with a little preparation; much that had occupied them I could have done at a moment's warning. One feeling, therefore, which had undeniably qualified my satisfaction in being there, the dread of finding myself absurdly and ridiculously deficient in something that I should be expected to know, was almost removed by this hour's observation, so that when the signal was given for the girls to retire, I walked out, carrying with me a stock of complacency which, alas, like many other suddenly acquired riches, was destined soon to melt away, and leave me in a poverty

all the more humiliating and painful for the condition it succeeded.

Breakfast was over—coffee, bread, and more of the bad butter, with a morsel of salt fish. The bell rang for the forenoon session. Now the battle was to commence—no longer a spectator—the weapons were to be in my own hands. I had a seat assigned me, books brought, a slate, writing-book, pens, etc. I was at last fairly on the road where I was expected "to run famously." The first class in grammar was called and took their places, five of the largest girls and seven boys, three of them young men. I was watching rather than studying, and the teacher, seeing me pick up the book they were called upon to bring, looked a moment at me and called me to come to the class. He was a heavy-featured man, with an easy, dull, good-natured face, whom we had also to call by his Christian name of Noah. It was not many minutes before—if I had been capable of a rational wish—I should have wished that he had been *the* Noah, and had never been able to descend from Ararat.

I obeyed his summons, thinking that it must be right, but without the remotest idea what grammar related to, or what manner of exercise this class was to go through. As I approached the seats, room was made for me next one of the girls, and I sat down considerably bewildered, but very resolute. I relied much upon a downright power I was conscious of, as I suppose men used to of old, going into the field with battle-axe or broadsword in hand.

The recitation commenced; I listened, all ear and nerve, but the mystery was utterly inexplicable—a proposition in conic sections could not have been more so. The questions were approaching me—adverbs, relatives, nominatives; transitives and intransitives; objects and subjects; subjectives and comparatives; participles and infinitives; all bearing down mercilessly upon my confused brain. I made a wild endeavor to catch some gleam, as the storm came on, by which I might shun the horror of the betrayal I saw before me, but it was in vain. The last

question was put and answered. At the next word I should be called upon. My sight was dimmed, so that the letters ran together in a black mass upon the page before me, and I held my breath in expectation of the tones that should summon me to speak, when some good spirit suggested to me: "Tell him you cannot recite, and leave the class."

I rose and said, bluntly: "I have never studied grammar, and I can't answer these questions. Will you let me take my seat?"

He nodded, good-naturedly, and I moved off without looking at any face, though I *felt* the smile on several as I passed them.

When I sat down and had recovered myself, so as to cast my eyes back to the class-seats, I saw a girl, whose manner and bearing had before offended my taste, laughing, tossing her head in my direction, and whispering to those near her; all which showed plainly that my case was under no very respectful discussion at that moment. How my blood boiled! and how I resolved, looking at that shallow face, which was poorly pretty, well laid out, and colored merely, but with not a ray of earnestness or real character in it, that I would leave its owner out of sight behind me in six months.

"Who is she?" I asked of a little girl sitting near me, whose elder sister, a brilliant brunette of about my own age, was also in the class.

"She is Jane Tynedale, from New York. You needn't feel badly," added my little neighbor, considerately, "for anything she does. She is the most disagreeable girl in the school. Sister can't bear her, nor I either."

With all my pride and resolution, I was not above accepting this little morsel of sweet to modify the bitter of this, my first draught from the sacred cup. I turned over my books with a firm purpose not to leave my seat again till the Principal was there to tell me what to do.

At noon, there was a knot of girls gathered under the quince-

trees in our yard, listening to Jane Tynedale's account of how I parsed in the first class, and how near she came to dying of suppressed laughter when I got up and told Noah, like a fool, that I had never studied grammar. My face, she said, was "as purple as the queer-looking frock I had on, and I acted as if I might have lived all my life in the woods, which she believed I had."

There was some laughing at her story, but not enough to hinder me from walking that way and presenting myself before her audience. It is probable that I was braver for remembering the words I had heard about her in the morning. It requires so little effort to face an unpopular foe. I looked straight at her, my eyes telling her plainly, "I have heard all you have been saying," and she showed her lack of courage instantly in the changed color and expression of her face.

"How long have you studied grammar?" I asked.

"Six or seven years," was her reply.

"Very well," I said; "you laugh at me to-day because I have never had one lesson in it; but mind now, I shall not study it seven months before I shall be able to teach you."

She laughed loudly, and exclaimed: "That's a likely boast, when I am the best grammarian in school. Why, Benjamin sometimes has me hear the lower classes for him, when he is hurried."

"Never mind that," I replied, doggedly; "you may hear the lower classes, and yet I shall be able to teach you before I have studied grammar as many months as you have years. You all take notice, girls, and see if it isn't true by and by."

I felt that I could count most of them on my side at that moment, and that if the boast seemed vain and idle to them, they would still enjoy seeing it accomplished.

CHAPTER LII.

"Sow thy seed, and reap in gladness!
Man himself is all a seed;
Hope and hardship, joy and sadness,
Slow the plant to ripeness lead."

I DID not get fairly launched upon the waters of the Pierian fountain for a whole week. I was very impatient, but it took all that time to convince the kind and careful Benjamin that it would be safe to let me add grammar, astronomy, and natural philosophy to the studies he had first prescribed for me. When I had gained these points, and, feeling that I had enough to do, wrapped myself in the mail of resolution, to do it, I went on with a steadiness and rapidity which nothing could interrupt or disturb. I soon found the advantage of being solus in my studies. I did not have to measure my own progress by the capacity of others.

Early in the winter, I took my place in the first grammar class, and was not unfrequently consulted about the analysis of sentences, and passages in the old poets, whose involved periods afforded a fine opportunity for the exercise of thought and skill in the study. I had passed by all the mere technicalities and forms long before. Miss Tynedale was below me; for the dear, good, fatherly Benjamin, with a certain pride in the article he had so nearly made from the raw material, used generally to sign me to the first seat on his right, and often exchange opinions with me, on questions that fell to other pupils.

"It is not yet seven months," I said to her, one day, as we rose to go to our seats, after a question, on which she and I differed, had been decided with me. "Next month I shall only go in the class occasionally, when there is something difficult enough to be worthy of my attention. It will be exercise enough, Ben-

jamin thinks, for me to hear you sometimes, and once in a while parse with you." It was her turn to color now, so darkly, that she scarcely looked, for a moment, whiter than I did.

My career at this school was an uninterrupted triumph, over the only obstacles that I recognized—the difficulties of study. I marched through the mathematical course, as Benjamin would sometimes declare, with a humorous expression of alarm upon his face, "without let or hindrance." He thought it was all very easy to me, because I did it rapidly ; but, in fact, I had a deal of very hard work with the different branches of these studies. I had one rule, however, which I never allowed myself to break, and I think it would be as serviceable to young pupils in these days, as it was to me. It was, never to advance a step with any kind of solution, till I fully understood the principle by which it was attained. Thus I often came to a stand-still for days, while my class-mates were moving on with great satisfaction in advance of me ; but this was more than compensated by and by, when, armed with the master-key, I overtook and left them behind, having no more questions or delays, and being entirely able, often, to supply the place of the teacher, in helping them on.

"You are the strangest creature," said an intelligent and hard-working girl, one day, "that ever I saw. When we began this book (it was some of the more advanced ones of algebra), you seemed to be stuck fast, while the rest of us went on ; and now, here you are, after a week of delving, ready to teach us all. What is the reason of it ?"

"It is because," I said, "I *will* know the law first. While I am learning that, you think you are beating me famously, but when I have once got it, I have no more study to do, while you have to guess, and try, and puzzle yourself all the way through. The law opens all the secrets to me, which you are trying, till the last day, to find out, one by one."

How vastly a student economizes time by this faithfulness, is not, I think, sufficiently appreciated. But for this method, it would have required, I have no doubt, two years for me to ac-

complish the course of study, which the good Principal wrote to my brother might be considered as completed, at the end of the first.

John had visited me once in the time—a very short, flying visit it was, but a happy one to me, since it not only satisfied, in a measure, my grateful love for him, but lessened my social difficulties sensibly. Nobody had a more personable brother, father, uncle or cousin. I could well be proud of him, and that was what I needed much at that time. My capacity as a scholar was established. It was next requisite to procure a recognition of some social position for me ; and this handsome, easy, fluent brother, was the best possible ambassador to a tribe of wild, thoughtless young girls.

The visit, however, had its sad, as well as its joyful aspects. He was going away to the far West—to the Mississippi—further off in those days, than the uttermost border of the continent is now. And before my year was completed, he was there ; and in answer to my own and Benjamin's letter, he asked, if I had no more studying to do, could I not assist in teaching till his return ? This I did, pursuing, meanwhile, such branches that were not taught in the school, as I could get books for; and, for the rest, giving myself up to the luxury of almost unlimited reading.

Benjamin had a large library, of which he gave me the keys. Histories, travels, biographies, works of science, metaphysics, religion and poetry, were gathered, in one vast store of wealth, in those cases, whereof I had the charge. I had, during the prosecution of my studies, read modern history pretty thoroughly, for a young girl who was guided by no wisdom superior to her own; and now I addressed myself chiefly to travels and biographies, as furnishing a knowledge of human character, which I found nowhere else. My most intense desire was to know persons—the inmost experiences of those lives whose outward deeds had arrested the attention of mankind. How scantily was it gratified in the best books ! History was only a record of deeds—rarely, if ever, penetrating the great laboratory of purpose—and

almost never offering a glimpse of the heart. Biography furnished no analysis of its subject—it, at best, only attempted to reflect his external life, as a mirror shows us the gestures and actions of the figure before it. We had not then Carlyle, with the infallible touchstone of his humor, trying every quality, and turning the man inside out, for our inspection; nor Emerson, with his deep sea-line, sounding the nethermost depths; nor the phrenologists, axe and blade in hand, hewing broad and clear the paths of progress, and letting light into the darkened places; nor the analytical and progressive poets; nor the rational novelists; nor the thousand other clear-seeing souls and trumpet-voices, which now glorify and make smooth our onward ways.

Looking back from the standpoint which any young, growing soul can plant itself upon at this time, I seem to have been in darkness; but it was light to me, and I drank it in at every pore of my life. Some books I read, more from respect to the world's verdict upon them than from sympathy with, or appreciation of their greatness. One of these, I was long ashamed to confess, was "Paradise Lost." I was disgusted with the description of Sin—shocked at the possibility of such deeds and thoughts anywhere in the universe, as were assigned to Heaven and its contiguous territories; and only reconciled to Milton or his poem, by the wonderful beauty and sweetness of some of its descriptive passages. For a long time I thought it possible that this might be the penalty of my unlawful self-indulgence in reading this poem clandestinely, in the hours set apart for religious meditation and instruction in the meeting-house. I used to conceal the miniature copy under a corner of my shawl, or in the folds of my dress, and when the meeting was "settled," bring it carefully before my eyes, behind the girl who sat in front of me, and very shortly I was in a happy state of unconsciousness to all the miseries of the hour and place, whether they resulted from the silence of the company assembled, or were aggravated by the whining utterance of endless commonplaces and truisms, a vocal exercise which, by courtesy, was called preaching.

The necessity of submitting to this hebdomadal infliction was indeed a severe one to me, as well as to most of us scholars. I was not in the remotest degree susceptible to the sort of spiritual life that was corked up and kept calm in these reverend bottles. So far as I saw and felt it, it was formal, ungenial and soulless. Even our good Benjamin, whom I loved and delighted to talk with, in his normal state, became stiff, forbidding and mechanical at the meeting-house. He entered for the time into the form, and to all intents and purposes the spirit was not, till he was again without those walls. A horrible kind of asphyxia seemed to seize upon us, as if we had been thrust into a cavern filled with fixed air, and could no more breathe, speak or move till the period of our sentence was passed over. I acknowledged the worth, purity and excellence of the people. I respected their secular lives, because I knew how blameless they generally were, and I had a kind of theoretical reverence for the religious influences, remote or near, which had produced so good and worthy a body ; but practically I was so unfortunate, and it was a real misfortune, as to be wholly unable to catch the faintest gleam of the chilling inspiration that seemed to freeze and stiffen them into such comfortable repose and quietness. I could not meditate in that unnatural stillness ; and the fullness of the life within would make itself manifest, at times, and these perhaps, not rare, in ways less reverent and staid than the worthy elders could approve. Thus I not unfrequently incurred censure, which, if the rules of the school and meeting were one with the laws of true personal freedom, was deserved. I was fain to believe, intellectually, that this was so, but, practically, in the real heart of my conviction, I could never get it to stick ; and so before the long silence was over, or the sermon doled out in the set phraseology, which I soon learned by heart, I was sure to be caught in some act or gesture of involuntary protest, which brought me under displeasure for the rest of the day. In the preaching we heard, except when some gifted stranger was present, no ideas ever surprised us. There was an invisible peck

measure of musty moralities; a yard-string of religious saws and ancient truisms; and, by comparison, a bushel of Scripture phrases; and these constituted the stock and staple of our religious instruction. They were alternately aired, in dolorous sing-song tones, for the edification of an assemblage, generally numbering from a hundred and fifty upward. No wonder that this starved sect was shivered and broken into fragments, when a man with a living soul and a heart of fire, smote upon it. In the antagonism between spirit and form, the first had been well nigh smothered by the overlaid crusts of more than two centuries; the only healthy sign of life it could give was to upheave, as it did, and leave the fragments to recollect themselves as they have by the laws of true affinity.

CHAPTER LIII.

"Then I grew into thought, and with inward ascensions
Touched the bounds of my being."

I REMAINED three months in the school, half-scholar, half-teacher, and whole librarian. At this time I believe I had not an enemy among the scholars, but I had also few friends. Absorbed in study as I was, I scarcely knew the demands of my own heart in that direction, as I should have felt them under other circumstances. Nature rarely produces one instrument of which all the keys play in simultaneous accord, and at this time the grand harmonies of thought were more attractive to me than any melodies of the affections. Humanity appealed to me in masses more than by individuals. True, I was seeking representative souls everywhere, in all heroes and heroines, living and dead, real and fictitious.

Josephine and Helen Mar were my late ideals, one seeming nearly as real to me as the other, and both lifted by the out-

ward glory and fortune of life immeasurably above my approach. Of all the practical, working women whom history had brought within my small circle, Elizabeth Fry held my highest reverence. I had but a slender memoir of her, but she had come to me years before in the wilderness, and her deeds had appealed so keenly to the strong spontaneous sympathies of my heart in that untutored time, that she became ever afterward set apart from our sex, in a glory of her own. I could not learn, however, that she had been moved by any motive but that of tender compassion for those who were the recipients of her goodness, while I was conscious of another, myself, often quite as strong in its action as this—an intense curiosity to penetrate the innermost centre of the stained soul, and observe the mysterious working of that machinery by which so fatal a result was produced. Regarding legal criminality as only one form of universal sin, and all as at war with the supremacy of good, which I felt ought to be ever the great fact, as well as law, I earnestly wished to penetrate to where the awful secret could be disclosed to me. It was one of the subjects to which my thoughts naturally turned, when left free, and which thus inevitably stamped itself upon the future.

CHAPTER LIV.

"If thou art staunch, without a stain,
Like the unchanging blue, man;
This was a kinsman of thy ain,
For Matthew was a true man."

My three months were drawing to a close, and there was no news from John. His latest letter had been dated from New Orleans, and came unpaid. It took the last quarter of a dollar I possessed, to get it from the office. And all my courage to face its contents, for I knew that this unusual fact betokened

something it would make me unhappy to hear. Even so. He had lost everything that he started with; had been very ill, barely escaping with life, and was able to write "just these few lines," to let me know the facts. Could I not teach school, and provide for myself till he could get on his feet again?

Certainly I could, and at once communicated my sad news to the good Benjamin. With a real, fatherly tenderness he told me not to be discouraged; that I was well able to do it, and he had frequent applications from persons wishing to employ teachers in their family for the winter. If I wished it he would name me for the first good place of that kind he had the chance to fill.

Yes, I wished it, and would be very grateful, too, for there was pressing need of my having other resources than my bed and food, and that very soon, too.

My best dress at this time, for the cold season, was coarse stuff, of a dark, dirty, nut color (I wonder if colors are cheap in proportion to their power to offend the eye), and I had utterly worn out everything in the form of ornamental garments, that I had ever owned. They had been few and simple enough, but a neat white collar or cape, however plain, is a great aid to an indifferent dress.

I now began to prepare myself mentally, for, it will be seen, I had little other preparation to make, to leave this spot, which had been the happiest home I had known since a very young child. Of the little community I was leaving, there were but two besides Mr. Barton, from whom I separated with any real pain; these were Miss Hill, the teacher of French, and Miss Barnes, her best pupil. The former had but little advantage of us in age, and perhaps more in general culture. She was a young Quakeress—the daughter of a man who preached sometimes, but only when he had something to say; and who trusted so much to the nature God had given him, both in his public ministrations and private life, that, although himself the son of an old and well accepted preacher, and a man of blameless life, he

lived under the shadow of a cloud during his whole manhood. Original, witty, genial, impulsive; keenly alive to the innocent enjoyments of social life, and eminently natural in speech and action, he was the delight of the young and progressive souls about him, and the dread of the stagnant ones, who shrunk from having the mantle, in which time and custom had folded their shrivelling natures, drawn aside.

His daughter was like himself, in many of those qualities which make a young girl attractive and lovable. Without being beautiful of feature, she had a countenance which piqued and led you on, to see, with interest, all its variety of expression. She was very fair and tall, and her well-set head was crowned with a mass of brown hair, that fell to her feet when loosed from the comb, and that lay folded and coiled about it, when dressed, with a richness and profusion, which I must have been more than mortal, not sometimes to have envied. Miss Hill was my first and dearest friend. I liked her wit, which was so pure and unstudied, that it surprised as much as it delighted one; and her genuineness, which, without a particle of bitterness in it, quietly rent into shreds the little shams and artifices that had their home among us. I was sure of a purity in her, which imputed to others nothing worse than itself—of a generosity which accorded to each nature the fullest measure it could fill. She had a full, individual, life, which having once known, it was impossible to lose sight of. It stood by itself, and made its own position in the elements which surrounded it; as identical always, and under all circumstances, as the garden rose or dahlia, which cannot become other than they are, yet, being themselves, are always grateful and welcome to us.

Our common friend, Miss Barnes, was younger than either of us—the daughter of a wealthy physician; an aristocratic, spirited, resolute girl, lacking the spiritual freedom of an idealist and aspirant, but full of ambition, which blazed from her black eyes, and mantled her delicate cheek, occasionally, with a deeper color than belonged to the undisturbed currents that flowed be-

neath it. Less in stature than Miss Hill, she was well formed, with a neck and shoulders that might have been a model for sculptor or painter, so exquisite was the fall, from the fine, white throat to the shoulder-point. Miss Barnes was also witty, but her wit had an edge of satire, that made it sting where the other tickled. Her ambition made her lofty and distant to those she did not particularly like, and she was capable of an occasional thrust against even her friends, which surprised and pained them. I liked her for the sweep of purpose there was in her, and the steely flash I sometimes saw, which foretold that if ever she came hand to hand with a real foe in the battle of life, the grapple would not be fruitless. We were not particularly affectionate or demonstrative towards each other, but when we parted, we were not separated.

Thus I stood, and this was almost the sum of my social relations at this time. I waited anxiously, almost impatiently, for the call that should open the door of productive labor to me. More than one, I knew, was made, to which I was not nominated; but this, my good friend said, was because the places were not good enough for me.

At last, I was sent for one morning, about ten o'clock, to the sitting-room. Benjamin was absent from the school for the moment, and I was in charge. I called upon a grave young man, of about twenty-five, whom I had just been "doing a question" for, in surveying, to take my place, and went into the house.

There I found a person, in conversation with Benjamin, before the sitting-room fire. It was one of the frosty days of November, and the keen air penetrated my thin garments so uncomfortably, that I was glad to walk quickly forward and place myself near them, when Benjamin laid his hand upon my shoulder, and said: "My dear, this is friend Henry Carpenter. He is in want of a teacher in his family, and I have told him I could not recommend a better one than thou art."

"I am very much obliged to you," I said, in a voice that was

husky from sudden joy and gratitude ; "and I will try to deserve your kindness."

"I know thou wilt, I know thou wilt," he repeated ; "only keep up good courage for a day or two, and all will be right with thee. Canst thou get ready by dinner? Henry wishes to return immediately after."

"Yes," I said; "I can be ready in half an hour."

"Shall I make a bargain for thee, my dear? I think thou art not over wise in worldly matters."

"I shall be very glad if you will," I replied, closing the door hastily behind me, to hide from them what I could not longer conceal.

My need was very great, and my thankfulness and sense of relief commensurate thereto. I flew up-stairs, and, half-blinded by my tears, hurried my few scattered possessions into the same little trunk, and then sat down upon it. In the midst of the shower that followed this little performance, one of the girls, a good-hearted, simple creature, who had got leave for me to accompany her home more than once, during her stay at the school, and who had manifested a warm and trusting attachment to me from the first, came in, to see what my absence meant.

"So you *are* going at last?" she said.

I nodded.

"Where?"

"I don't know. It is fourteen miles from here."

"Whose family?"

"It is a Mr. Carpenter—Henry Carpenter."

"I hope they are good people."

"Yes, they are ; because Benjamin wouldn't let me go, if they were not."

"Well, good bye, then," she said, approaching me. "I suppose I shall never see you again."

I stood up, and she took me in her arms, very tightly, and kissed both my cheeks. I am ashamed to say that I did not re-

turn this demonstration, for I remembered, at the moment, a letter she had written me, during her absence in one of our vacations, every single word of which, except the place, date and signature, had been copied from a paltry little book that was about the school, containing the forms of all sorts of letters. I did not detect it, for I was unacquainted with the "Complete Letter-Writer;" but a girl, to whom I showed the epistle, produced me the original, word for word, mark for mark, and I had never been magnanimous enough wholly to forgive the harmless little vanity.

When the parting was over, she returned to the school-room, and I, somewhat diverted, by the scene, from my tearful intent, went down-stairs, where I found my employer, sitting alone. I would have retreated, but he detained me with some questions, and led me to ask some myself, on matters to which he must have thought me very indifferent, seeing that I was about to become a member of his family, in the responsible post of teacher to his children. I learned that I should have four pupils of his; that his household numbered twelve persons; that the school-room was a few yards from the house, pleasantly situated, light and warm; and that, in all probability, as he had learned that I was very capable in arithmetic and mathematics, I should have several young persons from the neighborhood, among my scholars; and that I was to be paid a dollar per week for my services.

All this I was glad to learn without asking, for I felt an unconquerable reluctance to approach these subjects myself. He considerately added, after a moment, pitying, I suppose, my childlike confusion, that if I needed money in advance, he would pay me the first month's wages whenever I wanted it. This was such substantial kindness, so timely and unlooked for, that it nearly took me off the feet of my self-control again; but I gathered up my dignity resolutely, and, with averted face, told him that, after a little while, I should be very glad to avail myself of his goodness, as I was dependent on my brother, from whom I had not heard in a long time, and who was very ill when

he last wrote, besides having been unfortunate enough to lose everything he had.

When I had made this speech, I felt that my side was fully stated. There was no need for him to know more, if I stayed a year with him; and I went out, to join Benjamin, and give him a last hour's assistance in the dear, old, abused, school-room. While I sat by him, or occupied my customary position, in hearing classes at the other side of the room, there were all sorts of telegraphic leave-takings going on; for it had already got abroad that I was preparing to go away, after dinner. Grotesque and absurd performances, with mouths, eyes, and hands, or serious and kindly looks, greeted me wherever I turned my eyes. Only Jane Tynedale—who was still there, and still studying grammar—seemed altogether indifferent to my departure. Every other face, even to that of the sturdy little fellow of six years, who had indignantly refused to love me, because I laughed so immoderately at one of his mistakes in reading, one day, had some look of regard, or some kindly merriment, mocking sentiment, upon it.

School was over, and the scholars gone. Benjamin and I lingered a moment at the desk. I was mechanically explaining to him certain parts of my duty, condition of classes, whereabout of books, library keys, and so forth, when he said, "Come with me in the French room, my dear, and bring the keys of those book-cases. I should like to see how thou hast performed thy duty there."

In those cases was kept the library for the use of the school, comprising many valuable books. The more select one, in which he had especial delight, was kept in the dwelling-house. I took the keys, and we walked in. The girls were gathered there, about the stove. There were now, I think, twenty-four or five of them, though several were absent, among whom were both my especial friends, Miss Hill and Miss Barnes.

"What hast thou been reading last, my dear?" he inquired.

"Watson's 'History of the Reign of the Philips,'" I replied.

"I think thou hast not finished it, hast thou?"

"No."

"Then thou wilt take the two volumes as a present from me," he said, taking them down, and putting them into my hands. "And I think thou art fond of Thomson's 'Seasons,' too, as well as myself. Take that with them."

It seemed as if there were a conspiracy of benevolence against me; for while I was endeavoring to frame some utterance of thanks, a staid, thoughtful young woman, whose sore calamity it was to have but half of a right hand—just the palm, with nails growing out of the metacarpals—came up, quietly, and, raising with that infirm member the cover of one of the volumes, laid beneath it a clean, neatly-folded collar. And another one brought me a little ruffle, very nicely crimped; "to wear about your throat," she said, "when you have on that ugly-colored high dress."

I had to run away, with my full hands, up to the refuge of the lodging-room. There was no withstanding all this. Just as I had placed the precious gifts under the lid of my trunk, the dinner-bell rang; and I hurried my face into a dignified hardness, by resolution and cold water, and went down, for the last time, to the table from which I had scarcely been two days absent for fifteen months.

There were good appetites at dinner that day, but mine was not one of them. I caught my employer's eye, several times, in a wondering survey, it seemed to me, of my general appearance; but as I could detect no positive dissatisfaction in his regard, and felt secure in the opinion he had received of my qualifications and character, I did not let his scrutiny trouble me. In leaving the table, I was detained, at the foot of the stairs, where Benjamin still remained in his seat, waiting to speak to me.

"My dear," he said, "I am going for a walk with the boys, and shall not see thee again, as thou wilt be gone before we get back. Thou must not be too quick to yield to thy feelings, child. I know thou art strong, and canst be resolute, if thou wilt, and there will be need sometimes; for thou wilt not always find as

good friends as thou art leaving here. I have talked with friend Carpenter about thee, and thou wilt be in good hands. I need not say to thee, be diligent and faithful in thy school; for I know thou wilt be. But if thou pleasest them well, thou wilt find thyself rewarded for all thy pains. Farewell, my dear."

We shook hands, as he rose to go; and, if I had followed the grateful and affectionate impulse of my swelling heart, I should have kissed the one I held in both mine. But there was so little demonstrative breath in the Quaker atmosphere, that I only blushed at my own weakness, and resigned it, after expressing all that could be told in a simple, but fervent clasp. And how much may be so conveyed by an earnest soul! Of all horrors that are not tragical, deliver me from the loose, meaningless touch of the hand with which so many persons meet us. To clasp my hand, is to say, "I am glad to see you. Your presence gives me a pleasure." When the act means this, it is not a ceremony. It is a declaration of the soul, responsive to the speech, the eye, and the countenance, which each publish the same thing in their own way. If this is not the spirit-fact of the meeting, why thrust forward, to offend me, a skeleton falsehood, which will not even lie with a tolerable earnestness, but will insult at once my self-respect and my sensibility, by saying, "I am only a sham, but perhaps you may as well accept me for something real, if it suits you?" I would as lief a loathsome reptile crawled over my hand, as resign it to such a touch of man or woman.

When I reached the sitting-room, and looked from the window, there stood Mr. Carpenter's chaise, a warm, comfortable-looking vehicle, at the gate, ready for a start. He came in, and said, "If thee has a large trunk to carry"——

"Oh, no," I interrupted; "it is very small. It will not be at all in our way." And I inwardly determined that I would not have this to say again. I would own a large trunk, even if it were not filled, that I might be spared the mortification of publishing so continually my poverty.

CHAPTER LV.

"Oh! 'tis the heart that magnifies this life,
Making a truth and beauty of its own."

Leave-takings were soon over—none of them reaching below the surface—and I found myself on the road, riding briskly, in a straining November gale that I had not been conscious of before, but which rent and whirled the few brave leaves that yet hung to the wintry boughs, and sent the autumnal rack flying through the stormy heavens, in wild confusion. My companion, who was warmly clad and muffled to the chin in a substantial wool wrapper over his collars, looked with some concern at my light shawl; and before we had driven a mile, which we did very quickly, for the road was descending before us, and hard, and clean as rain could wash it, he asked me if I were not cold, and at the same moment offering me his comforter to put about my throat. When I declined it, and asserted—what was true—that I was then warm enough, he laid it on my knees, and drawing the buffalo robe more closely about us, said: "We shall go home as quick as a good horse can travel fourteen miles, for I don't like the looks of the clouds, nor this violent south-east wind. It may rain in an hour or two."

He touched the noble animal before us with his whip, and we seemed to fly over the waste, brown earth. The speed and wind were so exhilarating that I utterly forgot that I ought to feel lonely and depressed; forgot, almost, to look at what was before me in the months next coming, and lived for the time only on the road and in the wild, hurrying air. We had but little conversation by the way, but enough to inform me that the man at my side had only an external life—in his property, which was

large ; in his fine horses and carriages ; and in his wife and children, because they were his, and therefore worthy of his pride. Books, he did not read ; newspapers seldom, but he went twice a week to meeting, and lived as well as any of his neighbors. And these appeared to be the light, and hope, and gospel of his life. If there were anything higher in it, except the good-nature and practical kindness which he showed me, and every one about him, I did not then discover it, nor ever afterwards.

The country was thickly settled, and richly cultivated farms, handsomely fenced, with great orchards and meadows, spread themselves on either side of the road, and climbed the hills away to their wooded tops, where the brown forest reared itself against the frowning sky. The world seemed to be filled with wealth and comfort, from which I did not feel myself altogether excluded. The spirit of the day had touched the central nerve of my life. From its vibrations came, in unaccountable flow, hope, strength, courage, self-reliance, and whatever else builds up and sustains the soul. Alas ! that the felt presence or absence of these grand and comforting attributes should so often depend upon the color of the clouds, the course of the winds, and the aspects of the earth. Had a chilling rain been falling, how should I have cowered and shrunk before it, filled with dread of the possible miseries of the future. Had it been a day of summer sunshine, nursing that unconscious indolence and softness of mental fibre which are so apt to steal over us, when the heavens smile and the winds breathe repose, how inevitably should I have foreseen the clouds and trials before me.

But here was nature, threatening her worst—with a certain good-nature in her eye, truly, but still a most palpable and imminent menace there—challenging me, in rousing terms, to bring arms to the field, and readiness to use them, if I came with expectations worthy a combatant in the life-battle. And I accepted the challenge with a gaiety and confidence I could scarcely have prophesied of myself under such conditions, and so reached

my new home in exalted spirits, and with a readiness to be pleased with whatever I should find there, that could scarcely have been overcome by any of the probable disagreeables of a comfortable country house.

When we drove up, two boys, and a girl older than either of them, stood in the front yard, eagerly watching our approach. The face of the girl was thin and delicate, with blue eyes—that dull, opaque blue, which I have never seen set as a window to a soul capable of high development. Her complexion and features were good, but their predominant language was weakness. The eldest boy had a grovelling face—strong and positive features, that were repulsive in every aspect; the younger one, about five years old, was a bright, beautiful child, with his sister's color and cast of features, but lighted up and glowing from the fire within.

"Here, children," said the father, assisting me to the ground, "here is your teacher;" and he summoned them to the inspection of me, as if I had been a bundle of merchandise in which they had special and peculiar rights and interest.

"Whath her name?" shouted the little fellow, keeping at a distance; while the girl and her big brother came up and shook hands, demurely, with me, each gravely uttering the words: "How does thee do?"

"Tell him my name is Eliza," I said, as I was ushered along towards the front door; "and ask him to come here and see me."

But he ran sturdily away to the back of the house, and I lost sight of him. I stepped upon the porch, and was received by a young, fair woman, smooth-featured, with very dark-brown eyes, which had an indescribable bluish or leaden tint in them, without which they would have been brilliant. Here was repeated the same "how does thee do?" quite as mechanically as the children had said it. But it sunk like a plummet into the breezy sea of my spirits, and was as soon lost there. To each of these inquiries I had to return the reply: "I am very well, I thank

you ?" and as neither question nor answer meant anything, or were heard with the smallest possible interest, I am obliged to confess that, by the time I had answered the twelfth individual, I was thankful the little three-year old did not feel it incumbent on him to repeat the inquiry, and that the four-months baby could not talk.

A great fire was blazing in the capacious Franklin stove, that warmed the family room ; and, through an open door into the next apartment, I saw, as I sat before it, a large table spread, and two girls walking in and out with dishes in their hands. They went and came so often that I was mentally wondering what the occasion could be that called for so much and such a variety of food ; plates piled with giant slices of bread ; hot biscuit, as large as the baby's head ; enormous rolls of yellow butter ; sausages ; stewed and baked fruit ; pitchers of milk and cream, and large loaves of cake. "Can it be the ordinary supper ?" I asked myself ; "or is there somebody here whom I have not seen ?"

Presently we were invited in. I felt more chilly than I had before entering the house, and little Caroline, when she saw me shiver, after I had taken my seat at the table, left hers, next me, and brought my shawl, which she carefully laid about my shoulders. It was a little deed, but unprompted, and so quietly done that it appealed strongly to my interest for the child, and helped me to resolve myself into forgetfulness of her weakness, and to determine mightily for her good.

There was no conversation during the meal ; a little broken talk about the day's business at home, the journey for me, the probabilities of the school being large or small, and other topics ; but these were all. The table was substantially furnished for eating, and those who surrounded it made that the business of the hour. From the very plain fare of the boarding-school, where one was always wholesomely hungry, to this laden board, was a contrast which I felt at the time rather inclined to wonder at than prove by doing justice to the viands before me.

"Take another piece of sausage and some more bread," said Mr. Carpenter, putting the one on my plate and handing the other. "Thee doesn't eat. Such a ride ought to give thee an appetite."

"It has," I said; for I had already taken, as I thought, a very full supper, and there yet remained the biscuit, and the cake, and the fruit and cream untasted.

"We live by eating here," remarked Mr. Carpenter, in a bluff, hearty way, receiving at the same time his third cup of tea, strong, and rich, with cream and sugar. One such, with a bit of bread and fruit, would have made a good meal. The largest boy, whose name was Joseph, and who sat next his old grandfather, whom he resembled more than any one else, seemed to give his full faith to the gastronomic gospel, for he ate of every dish and tried both cakes, commenting with a freedom that fell little short of rudeness on the flavor of one which he did not approve.

Little Caroline scarcely spoke. She seemed, in her soft, kindly way, to be taking me in. Whenever I turned my eyes to hers, they were fixed on me. She ate lightly, as if the supper was a subordinate affair, and indeed, in all aspects, she seemed strangely lacking in the animal fullness and power, that marked every other member, old and young, of the family.

When the meal was over, and we returned to the sitting-room, I called her to me, and questioned her about her age; which I could scarcely believe her correct in reporting as almost twelve (her mother did not look above twice those years herself), and her studies, which, I found, had been confined to reading, spelling, and the tables, with some attempts at ciphering and writing. Her brother Joseph, she said, was eight, and he could cipher a great deal; but she was a great deal better reader than he.

"So," I thought, as she left me to go to bed, "her face did not deceive me. She has not much power, but I will fill what she has to the brim." Her gentleness and delicacy appealed to

me, in the midst of so much gross animal strength and enjoyment.

After the children had left us, and the father had fallen asleep in the chair, his bluff, well-filled face looking redder and fuller as he slept, and the old folks had jogged cosily away together, to their own room, the mother and I had a talk about her family. Caroline's delicacy was acknowledged, Joseph's strength boasted, and the really beautiful, merry twins, who looked very much alike, and both "lithped" with precisely the same accent and voice, fondly laughed at. She was a true mother, and told me, sorrowfully, with, I suppose, some dim notion of a relation between the facts, that she was but little over fifteen, and not half a woman, when poor little Caroline was born.

CHAPTER LVI.

"The tissue of the life to be,
We weave with colors all our own;
And in the field of Destiny,
We reap as we have sown."

I WAS glad to be greeted by the earliest sunbeams looking down upon me, from the wall above the foot of the bed, next morning. I would have sleeping-rooms always front east, that the first communion of the spirit with itself, might be held amid the flush and pomp of a new day. Of all the daily agonies which may return to the tried and struggling soul, there is none more oppressive than the effort by which we pass from the death of sleep, to the toil and pain of life. How we shrink from the burden as, wave after wave, it rolls back upon us from the great dark sea, whither it has been wandering in our hours of blessed respite. How the spirit cries aloud for a little longer remission

—another tide of forgetfulness, that shall sweep over, and wash out those terrible footprints, which grief or shame have left upon the soul.

I rose instantly, gladdened by the light and warmth that came to me, but somewhat disturbed withal, that I should have let the sun find me asleep. For it was one article of my simple creed, to keep even with him: and then, a certain constitutional zeal always to do, in full measure, what I undertook, made me feel that I was behind time, if I were not always a little in advance. I liked to be up when he came, and to have the quarter or half hour which nobody would ever call on me for, all to myself.

Dressing as hastily as possible, I repaired to the sitting-room, expecting to meet the assembled family, but found only my two oldest pupils. Master Joseph refused my greeting, by turning abruptly to the window, when I spoke, and exclaiming: "Oh, Car'*line*, John Frost is coming here to-day, to go with me up to the little meadow, after nuts, and I don't want to go to school. Thee tell mother, will thee? I wish she wouldn't begin to-day," he said, in reply to some low remonstrance of hers, "for I want to go." He looked at me a moment, and then, coming almost to my knee, said: "Isn't thee tired?"

"No, my boy; I have slept well all night."

"Well, I wish thee was tired, and couldn't keep school to-day. Then mother would let me go."

He looked willful, and selfish, and I thought a lucky thought, as he stood there, which I immediately tried, to reconcile and win him with:

"Would you study well, and try to be a good boy, if I asked your mother to let you go after dinner?"

"Oh, yes!" he said, eagerly, "that I would, I tell you," forgetting for the moment the friendly "thee;" "I'd be as good as Car'*line*."

"You must say Caroline," I said. "That is her name; and not Car'*line*, as you call her."

"It's too long—but *will* thee ask mother to let me go?"

"Yes."

The first feeling of being burdened in my new charge, came from this little passage. There was such an overflowing animal life in the boy—such an eagerness for "creeturly delights," as our old preacher at school, used to designate all enjoyments which he did not approve, that I felt already the difficulty I should have in curbing these, and bringing him to any earnest mental application. At breakfast he demolished an astonishing pile of cakes, with honey and butter; and coffee, and ham, besides other et ceteras. Estimating him carefully with reference to the probable conflicts before us, I was dismayed by this huge storing away of ammunition, which, I saw, would all be made to tell upon me, in some way or other, in the days that were coming.

"If he would only eat less," I thought, wishing that I had him at our school-table.

After breakfast, I went to the schoolroom, where a good fire had already raised the temperature to an oppressive degree; but there was a south door, and windows on both sides that opened with pulleys. Everything that I touched here, worked so perfectly—everything was so arranged for comfort, order, plenty and warmth, wherever I went, that despite the table—the worst feature of the household economy—I began to feel myself very much at home by the time nine o'clock came; and I had got all the home pupils, with six from the neighboring houses, in their respective seats.

Caroline read very well; rather surprisingly so—with a pure accent, that is, and an expression that proved that the words were really signs of some meaning to her, not arbitrary sounds, to be uttered as an exercise merely. Not so Master Joseph; he stood up, and literally roared: his shoulders rising with his rising tones, and his over-fed face flushing and filling with the strain, till I could bear it no longer, and seized him by the shoulder, shaking the last half of a word out of him, as I would have wrestled with a boisterous dog. "Not so loud," I said, with

some fervent utterances within, which relieved me more than any audible expostulation could have done.

"Don't thee want me to read as loud as I can?" he asked, in some surprise.

"No, indeed. I wish you to read just as you speak here in the house—no louder."

"Why," he exclaimed, "Absalom White had me read as loud as ever I could."

"Well, well, my boy, that will do. Absolam White isn't teaching you now, and you must read as I wish you to. Go on now, but mind, it must be no louder than you talk."

Before I got his voice subdued, I had frequent occasion to wish that Absalom White had been blessed with at least the average auricular sensibility of the hippopotamus or mastodon, so vilely had he corrupted the vocal capacity of my pupil. It is a penalty of the dreadful error which has rejected, as sinful, the very sweetest and divinest of human gifts, the power of music, that the ear should lose its appreciation of sounds. But what the ear does not convey, the soul does not receive, and so it shoots out in stiff, unwinning angularities, which, however respectable they may be, we cannot accept thankfully in place of the harmony and completeness which full culture would give it. There are a great many Absalom Whites, to whose leather organs, volume is the only desirable quality of any sound. They may make very good smiths or machinists, but ought never to be trusted with any mission that involves the training of the human voice.

I gained upon Master Joseph by a steady, persevering process of reduction, made up of kindness and sternness; but my victory over him remained incomplete to the last day. Whenever the pressure was lightened or remitted, up sprung the animal to full and triumphant reign. I had no other pupil whose condition called for so much of this sort of labor.

My school, after the first few weeks, numbered twenty-six, among whom were several young men and women much older

than myself. I grew intensely interested in their progress, and worked for it, according to the scripture injunction, with all my might. In one sense, they all occupied one position towards me.

Apart from my interest in them individually, they were so much capital stock on which to prove my capacity in instruction. I worked very hard, but I was well able to do it, for my health seemed to be perfect; and the work was often rest. Oh! blessed days, when action flows spontaneously from untasked powers—when the bow never prays to be unbent, and life is sublime, because it offers us work to be done!

One question mainly occupied me that winter. Could I prove myself an effective worker? I have often marvelled since at the content with which I trod the small measure in which life was then meted to me. The winter snow upon the hills was not colder than I was, to all the interests that warm and quicken the young soul. My relations were as simple as it was possible that those of one human being, living in the midst of others, and bound to them by the ties of labor, compensation and home, could be. I enjoyed half an hour romping with the handsome, fat baby, after school, and almost every day had some little affectionate chit-chat with Caroline, and now and then a little political sparring with her father, who had good-naturedly consented to take a newspaper, to oblige me; and all the rest of my leisure was occupied in swift plying of my needle; whereby my dilapidated wardrobe rose from its ruins. Making and repairing—for there was an ingrained economy somewhere in the unweeded garden of my nature, that would not let me waste—occupied my hands busily, all the winter. I received some unexpected gifts of material from the mothers of scholars, which had the double value of real use, and of expressing an unmistakable satisfaction with my performance. I was thus, for the day, living a full life—working out faithfully my noblest idea, and rejoicing in the evidences of its value to those I served.

I received letters from Mary and John; the former expressing the content and joy of a wife and mother—the latter indicating

discouragement and concern for the future, but bidding me believe that all would yet be right with him, and consequently, with me. He had found occupation, which would help him home by and by; and once on his old ground again, he should be able to get along, and take care of me, too. But I felt no disposition to fall back upon these assurances. If further opportunity of study should come, well; for when I allowed myself to think at all of it, I earnestly desired it; but if not, I should also be ready to say "well" to that.

I made no social position in these months, was out of the house to tea but once, except when I went a very few times, as an appendage to the family. All that I knew of the simplest forms of social life, was of instinct—experience and instruction had taught me nothing.

CHAPTER LVII.

"The present, the present, is all thou hast,
For thy sure possessing;
Like the Patriarch's angel, hold it fast,
Till it gives its blessing;
And that cloud itself, which now, before thee,
Lies dark in view,
Shall, with beams of light from the inner glory,
Be stricken through."

The winter wore on; spring came, and with it the end of my term of service here. But before the last day, there had come an application for me to take a district school, for the spring and summer, in a neighborhood where one of my old schoolmates lived. I wished for employment, and answered that I would go. Here I taught six months, for twenty-five dollars, in a house that not one of the more thrifty farmers of the place would have

tolerated anywhere in sight of a road upon his farm—an unpainted, dilapidated, unsightly structure, of the smallest dimensions that would house the children and their teacher—no yard about it—nothing to suggest that delicacy and self-respect ought to be a part, both of cause and effect, in the daily acts of life. I was indignant with righteous anger every day, that the order and neatness which these wealthy people displayed, in providing yards and tenements for their brute animals, were not, at least, equalled in caring for their children.

When I found the forlorn old doors hacked afresh, and the poor, mean forms, which were never fit for use, bearing new marks of the knife, I could not remonstrate earnestly with the boys; for there was nothing to plead for but what I despised more than they did.

Here I made some friends, who were long among the dearest I had. Here I enjoyed the society, at rare and short intervals, of a woman, who had something in her nearer akin to genius than I had ever known—who kindled me by her conversation and reading, especially of poetry; while here, I, for the first time, visited and saw, at my leisure, a town, containing seven or eight thousand inhabitants. Here I revelled, with a child's eagerness, and more than childish curiosity, six whole hours of one day in a menagerie—transported with the lions, to African deserts, and with the tigers, to Indian jungles—skimming, with the gay parrots and chattering monkeys, the endless forests and blooms of the tropical zone—and toiling over the mysterious and awful ice continents of the Polar world, with the huge white bear, whose ceaseless up and down, up and down, up and down, through the whole day, awakened my pity, and sometimes haunted my sleeping and waking hours, many weeks afterwards. Standing before the lion's cage for a long time, I suppose—for the crowd had gone when I returned from the desert, whither his eyes had drawn me—I was touched upon the elbow by a keeper, who said: "I have to clean the cages, miss. I guess you haven't noticed that the people are all gone, have you?"

"No, I had not," I replied, feeling a little startled; but, looking around me, I saw three or four men, one of whom appeared to be a proprietor, or principal manager. I wished very much for an hour or so alone with the Asiatics and Africans, and without considering how strange a look it might have, I went, unhesitatingly, up to this person, and asked, if I should be in the way, if I stayed an hour longer in the tent?

He looked at me a moment, with a puzzled expression of face, and then, referring to his watch, said: "No, miss, no—you can stay an hour, if you wish to."

I thanked him, turned away, and commenced my quiet round at the zebra's house, when, as I was endeavoring to recall the very little knowledge I had of natural history, so as to place him, and remember something of his habits, I felt my arm rather earnestly taken hold of, and, looking up, saw, at my side, a tedious, dull young man, who had been of the party with which I had entered. He said, in a tone of wounded propriety, that they had been hunting the town over for me, fearing I was lost, till it luckily occurred to him that I might yet be where he had found me.

"Don't you see," he asked, "that the tent is empty?"

"Yes, I see. But I came here to look at the animals, not the people; and one of these persons told me I should not be in the way for an hour yet."

"Very well," he replied, reluctantly, "if you wish to stay, I will remain an hour with you; but I should think you had been here long enough."

"So I have," I replied, feeling that visions of deserts, and jungles, and ice-floes were as impossible in his presence, as the realities could be, in any of the fair midsummer gardens that surrounded us. He had a miraculous gift of inserting his dullness into the very centre of one's mind, and there holding a position of which no flight of imagination or forgetfulness could render one unconscious.

While engaged in this neighborhood, I read some of the

books which the world called then its best of their kind: Scott's Poems, and three of his novels—the "Heart of Mid Lothian," "Waverley," and the "Antiquary." I lingered long over the bewildering pages of "Lalla Rookh," whose shining sophistries appealed to my mirthfulness almost as much as they delighted my imagination, and whose piled-up imagery made the common earth on which I walked to and from my daily labors, seem richer and more beautiful than it had before.

This summer was made memorable, too, in my reading experience, by a disappointment from which it took me long to recover. I had never yet seen a copy of Shakspeare. In the few Quaker homes where I had dwelt, it was either a proscribed book, or an unappreciated one; for I had never found it; and I had looked forward to meeting it, almost as I sometimes dreamed of standing some day by the Pyramids, or ascending the Mountains of the Moon.

One day, when I had gone for a few minutes, out of my short noon-time rest, into the house of my bookish friend, Mrs. Brandon, I asked if she had Shakspeare.

"Yes; and would lend it me, if I wished."

"Will you let me see it now, a moment?"

She brought and placed it in my hand—a ponderous volume, well worn, in which it seemed to me I held unimaginable stores of wealth.

"You have read it a great deal," I said.

"Yes." I have had it many years, and I am very fond of reading certain parts of it."

"Show me them, will you?"

She opened to the Tempest, then to Midsummer Night's Dream, and, last, to Coriolanus. I asked permission to call for it on Saturday, the afternoon of which was my own.

When I sat down with it, I turned the leaves over and over, embarrassed with the riches from which I was to choose. But, as my eye lingered here and there, it fell upon lines that were far from pleasing to me—gross lines, which, ignorant as I was of

the vices of the world, could not have been spoken to me without giving mortal offence. I did not understand, perhaps I scarcely could have been made to at that time, that the dramatist was to picture human nature, not its ideals. I looked into those pages for greatness, purity, heroism, beauty—all that could kindle my enthusiasm, and lift me out of the common world wherein I dwelt, into a region peopled by gods and goddesses. I found, instead of these, gross men and coarse women, using language that made my cheeks burn, so that one of the daughters of the house, coming into my room, laughed aloud, and inquired what had happened to make me so angry. I was first strongly minded to lay the book out of sight till Monday morning, and then take it home, with thanks, and a confession that it had not pleased me; but as my hand lingered upon the leaves, they opened at the Third Act of King Lear. The power and the greatness of the second scene, arrested me. I turned to the beginning, and read it through, possessed by the awful passions that played alternately on my mind, but never once satisfied. It was all so strange, wild, wicked, and dreadful, that I could not be reconciled either to the good or the bad in it. With my imperfect reading, and total ignorance of the aids which the stage furnishes to the author, King Lear seemed to me a wild, inextricable confusion of demons, fools, and madmen, striving together amid storm, and frost, and wind, with the triumphs always to the worst. On the whole, I was sorely disappointed. The irredeemable feature of the book was, the grossness of the language, which the fine passages I had read did not reconcile me to. Shakspeare had been, in my imagination, a porphyry or jasper column, chief among a few, supporting a lofty dome, beneath which I had never yet set my footsteps. Within and without it was all a glory, and this had sometimes come to comfort and uplift me in the most laborious and darkened hours of my scholar life. I was willing to wait, though I had, too, somewhat of the impatient desire of my years, to enjoy, this long-reserved delight.

I closed the volume, and sat in the twilight, saddened and disappointed as we only can be in youth, when some great hope is taken from us, which our world is not yet wide or rich enough to replace. I could not possibly foresee that time, and experience, and knowledge of human nature and of life, more true than that we derive from the books called histories, would enable me to place myself in this great master's gallery, and see that, if there were offensive figures there, they had a sublime merit in their unshrinking faithfulness; and that he had the central stand-point, painting his subjects from within, instead of without—making up his men and women synthetically, instead of analytically. These thoughts belonged to later years, and did not enter into the train that passed before me on that summer evening.

Not to delight in Shakspeare, was to confess myself different from all people whom I would be like. I knew he was the admiration of the world. But how could refined tastes enjoy such language as I had read there, or the reproduction of such characters. I believed that as bad people as he had described, yet lived in the world; but why put them, with all their terrible deeds and words, into books? I did not want to get a worse, but a better, humanity than I knew practically, from the writers. I was discontented and clouded, under this discovery, and was brooding over it in the twilight of my chamber, when one of the girls came in—there were four of them, very large, very stupid, and very kind—and, approaching me with a more youthful and joyous motion than was common to her, said, "Does thee know who is coming here to-morrow?" (There were almost always visitors on Sunday.)

"No. How should I know?" And, in reality, I cared as little; for nobody ever interested me. The women were formal and ignorant—the men tedious and assuming. Young or old, it was pretty much the same thing to me. I generally escaped them as soon as politeness would allow me to.

"Well, then, I can tell thee it's somebody thee'll be right

glad to see; and I believe he's coming expressly to see thee; for he has never visited us. So thee had better get thy cap set."

This was a phrase very current among my acquaintances here, meaning the purpose to interest and captivate some one of the opposite sex. At another time, I might have taken it as a pleasant joke, for which it was, of course, intended; but I had just parted with Shakspeare, and was in no mood, either for receiving common people or being joked about them. So I said, gravely, "No one need come here to see me, to-morrow. I shall be busy all day; and I have no cap to set for anybody."

"Well, thee needn't be so sober about it," she said, laughing. "I suppose he may come, if he likes, whether thee cares or not."

"Oh, yes," I said, "but don't bother me about staying downstairs." For it was a fashion of their hearty hospitality, to have the whole household unite in entertaining the guest. To this end, I was sometimes not a little annoyed by their importunities; and I wished, now and here, to secure myself from this in the anticipated visit. Suddenly, it occurred to me that I did not yet know who was coming, and I asked.

"It is Mark Alger," was the answer.

I was at once interested, because he was the person who had replied to an article I had published in one of the papers of the neighboring town, defending Mr. Clay from some mean aspersions in the print of the opposite party. This man was said to be very clever, and certainly the article I remembered was at once keen and courteous. I thought I should like to see the man who wrote it; and whom I had often heard spoken of, always favorably, as to his intellect, and not otherwise in regard to character. I had a great reverence for intellectual power, and I had seen as yet but few persons endowed with it above the ordinary measure.

CHAPTER LVIII.

"Is not this a man—a proper man?"

I DID not go to meeting next morning, as was my custom. The family all went, leaving me alone in the house; and I remained within, though it was one of Heaven's own mornings, and every particular leaf, flower, bird, and cloud was clothed with an added life and glory, drawn from the soft sky, and the tender sunlight, and the delicious air which just rustled the foliage and shook the odors of the flowers from their tiny cups.

I sat at my window partly sad, partly expectant. I had sustained a great loss, but I hoped something was coming to me. And already I was prepared to accept healing. It is the law of life; we let go the past and turn to the future for redress. And we find it in the looking. For time and chance are laden with concealed blessings, which the diligent searcher cannot fail to find. In the new person I hoped for somewhat that as yet had not come to me in the mind of any man; only in scanty fragments in those of women. I hoped for a degree of power and culture that I could clearly recognize as superior.

I dressed myself slowly, expecting the guest would arrive with the family. I put on a plain white muslin, an opaque fabric—it was the only white dress I had—a double lawn cape over my shoulders, and my toilet was complete. I remember, as I glanced at myself before going down, that I saw with deep pain and humiliation how excessively plain my face was; not so dark certainly as once, but wanting symmetry in the whole, and everything like beauty in each particular feature.

There never was an undeformed girl, so very homely, I said to myself sorrowfully, as I turned away and went slowly down the stairs. I was generally buoyant with a very light, quick and springing step. I scarcely ever when alone went up or down-stairs in the ordinary way. A step at a time was too slow for my intent haste to be where I was going, and I had acquired a habit of *scaling* up two steps; and, with my hand on the rail, coming down in some indescribable fashion, three, and sometimes even four, at once. The girls used to declare that a stair-carpet would last me a lifetime.

But now I went with as leaden and staid a movement as any matron. I had reached the parlor and thrown back the blinds, to admit the air and as many little sunflecks as could make their way through the clustered foliage of the woodbine, and was just going to sit down, when I heard a quick step on the porch, which was followed instantaneously by a rap on the door. I was startled by the suddenness of the unexpected coming; but, supposing it to be some one of the neighbors, I opened the door, and found myself face to face with a person whom I had never seen. He lifted his hat, and spoke to me with a ceremonious politeness which I seldom experienced; and when I invited him in, he entered and seated himself with an ease and freedom that quite disembarrassed me.

"I am speaking to Miss Woodson, I believe?" he said.

"Yes, sir."

"My name is Alger—Mark Alger."

I was very much surprised, for I had not dreamed of this being *the* guest; and I came so near saying this in words, which I could scarcely keep back, that it added to my confusion.

"I did not expect to find you alone, Miss Woodson."

"It is but a chance," I said, "that the house is not closed. I generally go with Mr. Wilson's family to meeting."

"And yet I should imagine you are not greatly entertained or pleased with what you hear there?"

I acknowledged that I was not, except on the rare occasion

of a visit from some more gifted preacher, than those who belonged here.

"I should think," he said, "that the author of 'Twilight Hours' would not find much to please her in dreamy exhortations made up of passages of Scripture and set phrases, which have been current so long that all the silver is rubbed off them long ago."

In answer to my look of surprise, he said: "You see I know something of you, which you would not have thought I did." He referred to a few poor verses in which I had attempted to express some crude thoughts; and both were, in my own estimation, disgraceful, as soon as I saw them in print. I never forgave the editor to whom they were sent, for not burning them.

"I am very much ashamed of those lines," I said, "and I hope you will not refer to them again. My only comfort when I saw them, was that nobody would know where they came from.

"Then you should have disguised your writing; for they were sent very soon after you went into print as the champion of Mr. Clay, and the editor put the two together, when I went with my reply, and so we found you out."

"He must have very little to do," said I. "I thought editors had the least time of any business people."

"Oh, no," he replied; "the editor of a small weekly paper in a country town, has ample time to examine everything that comes to his office if he chooses to."

"Well," I said, by way of dismissing the subject, "I shall never give myself cause for like mortification again; and I wish to forget that I did this."

"Are you ambitious to write?" he inquired.

I scarcely knew what answer to make to this question. I wished he had not asked it.

After a moment I said, "I believe I am ambitious to do whatever I can do best; if I could know just what that is, I think I should try to content myself with doing it."

"Would you? But trying is not always succeeding, you know."

"I suppose not," I replied, conscious of a vague confusion in my own thoughts, arising from a perception of some sort of double occupation of his.

We were in truth each considering the other attentively, but under a pretence of paramount interest in the subjects we spoke of.

Mr. Alger was at least twice my own age in years; and had the air and ease of a man thoroughly at home in the world. Through the thin veil of words which he wove, I felt rather than saw a presence not wholly satisfying to me. It made me watchful of him, and gave me a certain disquiet after we had talked awhile, which I was very glad to have removed by the return of the family.

Then I had to meet the fire of the girls' smirks and smiles as they passed the open door of the room, going up-stairs. They were followed by two visitors, young ladies whom I had seen often before, and shortly after a smart, pretentious young man, their brother, entered the parlor and sat down. I found the strangers were known to each other, and shortly availed myself of the second comer's presence to leave the room. Up-stairs a good deal of joking was attempted, but it all fell dead at my feet.

I was not a bit captivated—not even interested—how could I be? for my visitor had, in spite of my best efforts, almost confined the conversation to myself—a subject in which I had then as little interest as one could possibly have. I did not return to the lower rooms till we were summoned to dinner. Mr. Alger rather shone at the table. Our meals were generally dull enough, but he managed when addressed, even in the common civilities of the occasion, to infuse into all his rejoinders some little spark of humor, some satire, or sentiment, or anecdote that kept up a ball of words, going from one to the other with increasing pleasantness, till the meal was over. I felt better reconciled, after this proof of his conversational skill, to his drawing near me, having first called me to a remote corner of the parlor,

to ask some idle question about a dried flower he had found there in a book. Here he kept me talking till the delay furnished a decent pretext for offering me a seat; and then taking another, he asked if I had read Bulwer's novels.

"Only 'Eugene Aram,'" I replied.

"Scott's?"

"Yes;" and I named those I have already mentioned.

"His poems?"

"Yes, 'The Lady of the Lake,' 'Marmion,' and 'Rokeby.'"

He was very fond of them; had the first at his tongue's end. He repeated some of the finest descriptive parts, with keen appreciation, apparently, of what had most delighted me. I had never talked the poem over before. In fact, I read, as I thought and lived here, alone. I took in, but never gave out; and I was surprised to find now much could be said and enjoyed by persons who had read and been charmed by the same books.

"How do you live among these people?" he asked, in a low tone, after we had taken the cream off Scott, and I had at last got warmed into downright talking after my poor fashion.

"They are very kind," I replied.

"I know it," he said, with a gravity through which mockery was just faintly visible. "I know it; they feed you well and give you a good bed. They do the same by their domestic animals; but that is not living, in the human sense."

"What I want beside," I said, "I provide for myself. I should have to do that anywhere, I think."

"No; not altogether. Living with some people, you inevitably get so much more than with others, just the same as in the sunshine you get more warmth and vigor than in the shade. There are persons, like the sun, their presence is always welcome and healthful."

"Yes; it must be pleasant to know many such people. I have one or two such friends—and the vision of Miss Hill rose before me—but I never see them since I have left school."

I wished to break off about this time, but finding that he

gave me no opportunity, I at length said: "Excuse me, Mr. Alger, I have had no chance of speaking to the other visitors, who are old acquaintances of mine."

"I was just about to take leave," he said, "and will not detain you. But let me say, that I am spending three or four months at ——," naming a small village three miles away; "I have a good many books there, some of which may be new to you, and, with your leave, I will ride up, a fortnight from to-day, and bring a couple of volumes with me. Will you trust me with the selection of them?"

"I shall have to," I replied, "if you bring them; but I beg you not to trouble yourself so much. Just now I have all the books I want from my neighbor Mrs. Brandon, near the schoolhouse. I am sensible of your kindness, but I cannot think of giving you so much trouble."

I felt all that I said, and could scarcely say it earnestly enough to convey my full meaning, for I shrunk from this cool, though good-natured way of establishing visits. This one had given me about equal annoyance and pleasure, and I did not wish to know that another was inevitable.

He took his leave, saying that "there was a great deal of false politeness in the world, about refusing to give trouble, when people knew all the time that it was a pleasure instead."

There was some bantering attempted after his departure, but I cut it short at once, and very soon found my way to my own room, whence I endeavored to see what the day had done for me.

The verses were an unmitigated vexation—a sound lesson which I never forgot; for never since have I perpetrated even a couplet that has got the length of the printing-office. My part in the conversation was also unsatisfactory. True, I had said almost nothing, but yet enough to leave upon my mind, when recalled, a vague sense of disquiet, the result of my extreme ignorance of the art of civilized life—the art of entertaining. "Was this right?" I asked; "or was that what I ought to have

said or done ?" And I ended by first condemning and afterwards pitying myself, to the extent of some natural tears, which had the effect of relieving in a measure my disturbed feelings, and clearing my perceptions sufficiently to make me resolve, if he came again, that the visit should not be so pointedly paid to me. I found, upon examination, that my disquiet arose solely from the demeanor of my visitor, not from anything that I could accuse myself of. I had simply sat and conversed with him on subjects which others did not join us in, because they were wholly unacquainted with them. There had not been a word uttered, except the few about themselves, which every ear in the house might not have heard ; yet I felt oppressed by the decided manner in which he had made it apparent that it was said to me, and to no one else, and somewhat disturbed also by the remembered presence of that something which I had doubted on its first appearance.

The girls of the house, who, thoroughly good-natured, were yet blessed with as little delicacy of perception as oysters, mentioned the name of Mr. Alger several times during the first days of this week, but it fell upon rock and yielded them nothing for their pains.

"Do you think he is handsome ?" asked one.

"Yes, in one way, but in no other."

"Well, I never heard of that sort of beauty before ; what is it now ?"

"Why, he has good features. Every one is very good, for I noticed them particularly. Forehead, eyes, nose, mouth, chin—all well formed and proportioned ; yes, and well colored, too, for his dark-brown hair and eyes are better with his pale face than jet black would be. And yet he has not real beauty—a man's beauty I mean—I hate the word in that connection, but I don't know any other, and so I have to use it."

"Why, what would you have, pray ?"

"A certain nobleness that he has not. There would be something speaking in the eyes—something which everybody would

trust as soon as they looked at them, no matter what their color or shape. I could paint it," I added; "at least I think I could, if I could paint at all, and I do hope I shall see it some day."

"Well, you are very queer," said my companion. "When you find it send or bring him here, will you? I should like to see it too."

CHAPTER LIX.

"Cease not Voice of holy speaking,
Teacher sent of God be near."

"Leave him to himself, that lowest depth
Of human baseness."

"Thine anguish will not let thee sleep,
Nor any train of reason keep."

I WENT through the fortnight without any event worthy of an hour's remembrance, except a letter from my brother, announcing his probable return to the North in the fall or winter. I rejoiced greatly at this; for, as I drew near the borders of the social realms, and began to be conscious of approaching them now, I felt the want of some guiding presence. The education which life had given me had, I knew, eminently unfitted me to trust myself anywhere out of my schoolroom or the family circle.

In this respect I suffered the lack of such cultivation as social classification bestows. Belonging higher in the scale than the foot, I had been trained only to that position. The occupations of my early years, instead of being such as they would have been in a family at about my social level, were those of the meanest servant, and every advantage I had enjoyed above that which would be conceded to the scullion, I had conquered for

myself—wrested, as it were, from the gripe of my hard fortune. It would be just if these difficulties could be borne in mind by those who are disposed to complain of the crudities of the American social state. There are men and women to be found in all walks of life among us, from the highest to the humblest, who have reached their present positions by earnest and righteous warfare, or have been thrown into them by revolutions in the wheel of fortune which no sagacity could have foreseen. Our system individualizes, and leaves general results to the influence of other causes than those which spring immediately from social organization. Its beneficent workings are peculiarly our own, and they are seen wherever we find, in the more elevated conditions of life, persons who were born and reared under the disadvantages of poverty, ignorance, and rudeness. Its reverse operations are common to all systems. If the humanity with which one enters into life will not sustain the outward position where it is placed, it at least will not sink faster or further with us than in the old, rigorous social states, where only mighty genius can rend the iron bonds which confine the poor man to his place.

We are crude, let us frankly acknowledge it; but our crudeness comes from that freedom which opens to all the paths of advancement. Life, with us, is a perpetual and universal struggle, in the progress of which very many get out of the places they are by education prepared to fill. But with the majority this displacement is upward, and if we reach the ascending plane, lacking somewhat of the culture and many of the accomplishments that would adorn it—if we arrive too late to acquire these, and thereby subject ourselves to disparaging criticism, let it be remembered that we are fulfilling a universal law; if not in the most graceful manner, at least with a laudable earnestness and purpose, which, faithfully adhered to, must result in good.

In the old countries of Europe, a girl bred as I had been since I was six years of age, could scarcely have found herself called upon to exercise the judgment and social discrimination which I

now needed, small as was yet my pretension, and narrow as was the circle to which I was confined. I had, properly, no home, or home influences—no guidance, no appeal, no help in any question that came before me, concerning my relations to others. In regard to all which, I was, as will be imagined from what has gone before, in a state of extreme ignorance. Therefore it was, that I felt embarrassed at the idea of receiving visits, and rejoiced doubly in the prospect of my brother's return, which, I thought, would give me, in some part, at least, what I so much needed.

The appointed Sabbath came, and with it the visitor and his books. They were, indeed, volumes which it would have been difficult to deny myself the pleasure of reading—Landor's "Travels in Africa," and the "Mutiny of the Bounty." I could scarcely have refused them, had I had any pretext for doing so. This day closed, as I had previously determined that it should, upon a quieter mind than I was before left in possession of. I had succeeded, by resolutely adhering to my purpose, in making the visit seem a general one; and this was a triumph which had a double value to me—it relieved me of present embarrassment, and gave me a consciousness of power to do what I thought right under difficult circumstances, which greatly restored the complacency I had before lost.

Mr. Alger was invited, by the young ladies, to repeat his visit, a courtesy which I had not the grace to join them in, though I was very willing, at this time, that it should be extended to him. I had enjoyed his presence and conversation, and my satisfaction had been but once a little abated by detecting the questioning look in his eyes which had first disturbed me. But I had not implicit trust in my own impressions, and when I recalled this uncomforting one, after the second visit I repeatedly dismissed it, as unjust to my new acquaintance and unworthy of myself.

Three weeks from that time—it was one of the sultry August days—I was just setting out for a walk, as the cool evening

approached, and had turned to enter an overshadowed lane, one side of which was bordered by a clear, gravelly stream, and the other, for a considerable way, fenced with a natural wall of rock, when I heard the sound of quick footsteps, and, almost before I could turn my head to see who was near me, heard the voice of Mr. Alger, speaking my name. I stopped, and he came up, with extended hand, and a particularly pleased look upon his face. The rein of his bridle rested upon his left arm, and the crinkled coat of his handsome, chestnut-brown horse, showed that he had been briskly ridden. I always had an affection for horses. Of all domestic animals, they command most of my sympathy and admiration.

"You have ridden fast," I said, looking at the gentle brute.

"Yes, for a warm day. In fact, I set out to call on you at about three o'clock; but I met a party of friends on the way, who took me off four or five miles, and afterwards I had to make that up, to get here before dark. So Chestnut Charlie is a little warmed; but I will make him fast here, and join you in your walk up the lane, and, meanwhile, he will have a chance to cool off—won't you, old fellow?" he said, slapping his shiny neck.

The brute answered, in such a way as an intelligent horse can answer human thought and speech. There was evidently a good understanding between the two parties, for which reason I felt better pleased with the human one. But the walk was a difficult question to decide. As he had found me going, on what pretext, short of one absolutely offensive, could I now refuse to go? I reflected, while he was securing his animal; and when he came to where I was standing against the rock, on the upper side of the lane, I had determined to go a short distance, without any remonstrance. I could do that, and turn back when I saw fit, without rudeness.

So we walked slowly onward, talking, meanwhile, of whatever came first to our thoughts—at least, I did; for I was at rest in my mind, and, therefore, was not using speech for concealment—when we came upon the subject of the African travels. They

had interested me profoundly; for, if there was anything in the world about which I felt a keener desire to know all that was known, than of the wonders of the Polar regions, it was just these vast and mysterious deserts of Africa, with their lost rivers, and huge, ferocious beasts, and myriads of oppressed humans, and of connecting intelligences scarcely inferior to them. My companion had had the same interest, with larger means of gratifying it. He had read all manner of travels in that country; and Arabia, Egypt, and Palestine seemed as familiar to him as his native State. Especially had he all the hypotheses of the Niger mystery. I listened to the various opinions he quoted, and the sketches of travel he gave from Burckhardt, Bruce, and others. He was particularly clever in this way, and I noticed not that the sun had set, until a flush of rose-colored light, falling on us as we came opposite an opening in the line of trees and high shrubs on the west, suddenly startled me into remembrance that we were at least a mile from the house, and evening at hand.

"Mr. Alger," I said, "I have been so interested in your accounts of those travellers, that I have forgotten time. The sun has set, and we must turn back."

"Oh, not yet, Miss Woodson. The pleasantest hour of the day is before us: let us not lose it."

"It is a considerable walk to the house," I replied, "and I prefer to go no further."

I had already turned my face homeward, and moved, slowly, two or three steps along the lane. After some more remonstrance, he very reluctantly joined me, and we walked along at a considerably quicker pace. I felt some trepidation, which I could not have put in words, perhaps, if I had attempted to. I was not exactly afraid; for I believed the person with me to be a gentleman; but I lacked confidence in myself. If anything but the most straightforward walking and talking should occur, I felt the slenderness of my own resources to meet it. I was embarrassed, too, because I was not clear how far it would do to show my embarrassment; and so, with the rather hasty walking

I *did* now talk for the purpose of concealing the uppermost idea. Without succeeding, however, in the smallest degree; for, through the transparency of my demeanor, anxiety was so broadly visible, that my companion at length inquired if there were any bears or wolves accustomed to haunt the lane at twilight, that I was so fearful of being in it at that time?

I was very glad, when we came in sight of the house, that no lights were yet kindled. We walked more slowly from that point; and when we entered the door, though it was wide open, we found no one within. I brought a lamp, and, taking another, went over the rooms, to find some one; but all were gone, except the old lady, who, in partial undress, from the extreme heat—which I also felt, just now, very much—was sitting in her old-fashioned high-backed chair, fast asleep. To wake her, and invite her into the parlor, was out of the question. I therefore went alone, after taking a refreshing draught of cool water, and renewing my confidence by the reflection that the girls could not remain out long. I needed this the more, because Mr. Alger had muttered something close to my ear, when we found the parlor unoccupied, which sounded very much like the words, "Thank Heaven!" and, on our way home, had conveyed, most unequivocally, his sense of being "horribly bored by those soulless women." He never spoke of them as young ladies, or girls—which was my more unceremonious way of referring to them—but always as women, in a ponderous tone and style, suggesting the broadest contrast to youth, grace, or spirit. Indeed, they were poorly endowed with these morning attributes, though their years were few. Nevertheless, I should have hailed the entrance of any one of them, with real joy, at this moment. I sat down on the sofa, under one of the open windows, and, taking my part in the conversation as well as I could, remained there some time, undisturbed. Then he came over and took a seat near me, speaking, in a lower tone, of myself—of my past, of my future; then of himself—of his lack of companionship

and sympathy; of the ignorant and vulgar people by whom we were both surrounded.

"You," he said, "are walled up here, as Clara was by the monks in Marmion."

I laughed a little, and said I did not feel starved or suffocated. It was a very comfortable death, if I was being executed.

"You understand me," he said, "and you know that I am right. Confess it now." And, at the same moment, he laid his hand on my arm. I drew back, but could not move far enough away to displace it; and he went on speaking, at first very tenderly, but, as I listened, becoming more confident and glozing, till, at the end of some minutes' unbroken silence on my part, he had, with incredible dexterity of thought and tongue, brought himself round to the utterance of words which went through and through my quivering heart, like poisoned arrows.

"It was very abrupt," you say. But it is probable that, plain, unattractive, undevoloped as I was, the practised, calculating man of the world did not deem me worthy more of his time and pains. With eyes riveted to the ground, I sat and heard his speech to its conclusion. I think I *could* not have moved a hand or foot, till he stopped; and then I lifted my face full before his, and rose slowly, looking at him. I remember the doubtful stare of his large eyes, and the paleness of his countenance, as I did so. I passed from the room, and staggered up-stairs, without an audible breath. It was the heaviest blow that Life had ever dealt me.

I reached my chamber, and closed and bolted the door; for I had a consciousness of an enemy near me, and I remembered that there was no one else in the house. The summer lightning was twinkling, in incessant play, around the horizon, and, by its unsteady light, I made my way along to my bed. It was an old-fashioned high bedstead, so far from the floor that I could not sit down upon it, and I threw myself, at full length, upon the white cover, and lay there, shivering in the heated air, cold all over, though, for breathing, I might as well have been in an

ove ; for I could not breathe. There was a stricture across my chest, which had been growing tighter from the first startling word I had heard, and which now threatened to suffocate me. I should have endeavored to call for help, had there been anybody in the house ; but I knew there was not, and so, after lying for a few moments in agony, I made a desperate effort, and got to the open window. I leaned over the sill, and out into the still night, gasping for breath, and wishing almost that it would never come freely again, that I might die at once, and forget all. I heard the sound of horses' feet, vanishing away on the distant road, and felt that he was gone ; but still I suffered When the blade is withdrawn, the wound yet remains. I did not attempt to reason or expostulate with myself, or even feel indignation. My spirit lay stricken down by this great humiliation, and refused to rise.

The stars shone above ; the lightning played in the low clouds about the horizon ; and by and by, ranks of black forms came out of the southeast, and ranging up against the clear sky, poured out their floods upon the earth ; but it all seemed like something that was occurring to somebody else. The occupants of the next room came in ; and from my windows I could hear their heavy, measured breathing, in the still air ; but the shower was long past, and the night was waning, before I left that spot, and went to my bed. When I rose to my feet, I felt the same sensations throughout my body that I had felt in childhood —in the morning which ushered in that dreadful day of death—as if I had been violently stretched beyond my natural dimensions and could not return to them but with great pain. I had not shed a single tear ; I had not reasoned, nor grown angry yet ; but the horrible oppression that first stifled me was gone, and I was so weary in every fibre, that I laid down and slept soundly, far beyond my usual time in the morning. When I awoke it was with a knocking at my door, which reminded me instantly that it was bolted. I rose quickly to open it, but the motion set my head in a dizzy whirl, which it was impossible for me to

control at once, so as to draw the bolt, but I answered to the voice, and said I would be down very soon.

I did not want food, but I knew that I must at least make a pretence of taking some, or report myself ill. Oh, for a plunge into a pool of blessed cold water! What would I not have given for it! But it was out of the question; and I had to hasten my ablutions, and go as promptly as possible to breakfast. There was no margin, in that thrifty household, for late comers to table—least of all, on Monday mornings. I saw that I was very pale, and had recourse to a rough piece of linen, which I applied briskly to my cheeks, not to attract too much attention; and when I descended, and took my place, I had the satisfaction of having to answer but one or two inquiries, and of hearing one of the girls say I looked as if it were "blue Monday" with me—a saying which I afterwards understood to imply that I had had agreeable company the previous evening, and been up late.

"No," said her sister, "Eliza was in her room when I came home, and that was only half-past nine."

"Yes," I replied. "I did not feel well last evening, and retired early; but I did not sleep till after the shower, and that, I suppose, makes me look as if I had been up late."

I was relieved to be no more pressed on the subject; for I could as soon have parted with my tongue, as let it utter a word of my trial and sorrow to these people. I hurried early away to school, in order to have a little time to myself, alone, in the fresh out-of-door world. The air was fragrant with the exhalations from the garden, and the meadows across the road; and the small birds were glancing to and fro, with chirp, and song, and twitter—seeming to congratulate each other that the world was brighter and more beautiful to them, than it had been the day before.

What a laden heart I bore along down the smooth road to the little brook, which always had a peculiarly friendly look to me! There are objects and places, in the natural world, as well

as persons, which have an appeal to us that is all their own. Sometimes they represent a friend, or a home, or an affection, or a hope. Perchance, we have first beheld them under an exercise of some particular attribute of the mind, and ever after they speak to it. My walk was but half a mile, but there were two objects within it which were so related to my nature—the brook, and a large thicket of shrubs and wild vines, which, during the whole summer, was thickly peopled with thrushes, finches, robins, and other birds, who, I fancied, were always saluting me, as I passed, with some message of cheerful encouragement. This morning, they were particularly gay, almost boisterous, frolicking from bush to spray, and

"Looking to the summer heavens complete"

with such abundant joy, that, while I saw them, I could not but turn my back upon the hateful shadow that overhung me. But it was only for the time. I had not steadiness and strength enough to press forward to a full victory; and, when the hour came, I called my little ones together, to undertake the dull routine of morning exercises, with no more soul or purpose in my tasks, than if I had been a machine of wood or metal, set there to perform certain motive phenomena. In truth, I was not there at all; for, with the hum-drum quietness of the house, I first began to think, with anything like deliberation, of the monstrous insult I had suffered. Before, it had been an instinctive shrinking—a horrible recoil—with which reason, judgment, and self-respect had nothing to do, as one sometimes sees a frail worm, crawling peacefully along, suddenly shiver and shrink, through all its coils, when it encounters an object or surface that is unfriendly to it.

Now, at this distance, I could begin to use my better faculties, to judge of and resent the diabolical affront. What would I not have given for courage to go, at noon-time, and tell my wretchedness, and pour out my accumulating anger, to Mrs.

Brandon! But it was impossible. I had need know one as a mother, or tender sister, to speak of the great outrage I had seen contemplated against me. All the violence and resentment that I was capable of, came thronging my tortured mind. The air of the summer day was filled with tongues of flame, that scorched me at thought of this man. But, as I reflected, I soon grew calmer, in the assurance I felt that I had given no occasion for any rudeness, still less for positive insult; for I had, in one way and another, gathered a sufficient knowledge of social law, to understand that a man might, without disgrace, do deeds, whose very shadow, falling upon the fame of a woman, would send her shivering to ruin. I had learned that my sex, always reckoned the weakest, always expected to trust to the protective power and strength of man, was entitled to do so only while it was faultless; but I did not know—how could I?—that, being so, in all matters of social purity, a woman was yet lawful game, which a man might hunt without censure, and lure to destruction, without sacrificing, in any degree, his pretensions to rank as a gentleman! I had never yet, for a moment, thought of women—at least, of pure and worthy women—as claiming any position, or exercising any virtue, outside of the narrow walls which old civilization had reared about them; but measuring myself by the standard therein erected, I could find no cause of self-accusation.

All day I pondered bitterly, rebelliously, over those insulting words, and the offensive manner, that unmistakably seconded their meaning. At the close of my labor, I went home, with a violent headache. How easily I could have given up all effort, and treated myself as ill! I was, indeed; for the terrible nervous shock and tension of the night before, had destroyed my appetite, and reduced my energies so sensibly, that, added, the wearing fatigue of the day, I was scarcely able to sit up till dark. During that time, I inclosed the three volumes that had so entertained and instructed me, in two pieces of coarse paper, neither of which alone was sufficient, tied them about with any

bit of soiled twine that came first to my hand—meaning thereby to express that thus, with rubbish and waste things, which I wished never to see more, I threw their owner from me ; and so laid them on my table, marked neatly, upon a blank bit of fine paper, wafered on—

"For M. Alger,

——, ——.

I asked that some of the family who were going to the village next day, would take them, as Mr. A. had forgotten them on Sunday evening. The first tears I shed, were over these books. They suggested to me how much I had lost, that it would have been so delightful to enjoy, in the dearth of thought and true life to which I was condemned. They brought back the pleasant talk, on the countries of which they treated, and on other subjects and countries, so very superior, in its tone and scope, to that I heard from anybody else ; and thence it was a natural and quick transition to the whole mournful phase of my late experience ; and the sense of desolation which smites the young heart when it is robbed of its trust in life, and in persons, rose and filled my bosom to bursting. The world became, suddenly, a great waste, in which I seemed to find myself alone, friendless and distrustful. How miserable I was !—not in that hour only, but in many that succeeded it before I left that place.

How painfully and discouragingly this testimony of actual manhood contrasted with that I still cherished, but now almost feared might have been a dream, sent to me so long ago, when a little child, in the wild forests of the West ! Involuntarily, as the burning recollections rushed over me, I found myself placing side by side this one whom I could not sufficiently detest, and that one whom I learned to reverence, more and more, as the perfect type of what, in youth, the pure and aspiring soul of a woman always worships—perfect manhood. It is the representative of Divinity to her. Its personal sufficiency and power are rest to her comparative feebleness ; and the nobleness which, if

she be noble and pure herself, she imputes to her hero, whether brother, friend, or lover, makes her worship, the grandest act in the opening drama of life. By it, both worshipper and worshipped are lifted above mortal conditions. They are, for the time, made dwellers among gods.

A grand ideal manhood or womanhood, coming early before the soul, and abiding there till all its stature, and breadth, and depth are ineffaceably taken upon it, is the most inestimable of the blessings which life can give us. There is then planted a seed, which, with whatever adversities and hindrances, is destined to live. There is then enshrined an image, whose likeness we are seeking, in all after time, with a religious belief that it exists; which also we, sensibly or insensibly, liken ourselves to, in the seeking.

I would choose that my son, or my daughter, if pure and self-centred, should early know and love, though ever so hopelessly, the noblest youth or maiden among all. Since no loss, however painful, of a good, can be so calamitous, in the long run, as never to have had it our own, if but for a day, or an hour.

CHAPTER LX.

"Oh, restless spirit! wherefore strain
Beyond thy sphere?
Heaven and hell, with their joy and pain,
Are now and here."

"Lift thou the burden of the weary."

Pass over another year—and leave, as I endeavored to, the odious experience which marked the last one, out of memory—like toils, with like rewards in each. No real events breaking the daily routine of the dull life. No angel coming down to stir the waters, which seemed stagnating, far and near. Oh! for a wind, to run over them—a tempest or hurricane, to toss them into foam—a tornado, to wrench them up from their long sleep! I was sometimes hopeless in these days; it seemed that nothing could ever happen to me again, to break up the tiresome round of school all day, with children, tiring my ear by their incurable droning, and my soul by their dullness; and my evenings, spent either in seclusion with books, none of which had for me the potent spells of former days, or with persons who had no property in ideas, and who were content, when one was offered them, to wonder and dismiss it. How my soul hungered for some living communion and sympathy!

I had heard from my brother but twice, in all this time; and the last summer was well past its drowsy mid days, before a third letter came, that startled me, as a clap of thunder sometimes does, coming upon us in a bright day. It bade me, whatever I was doing, at once to give up all, and make myself ready to join him, in about a fortnight, in one of the northern cities of the State, where, on the 1st of September, I was to enter an

academy—the best institution in the State, he said, proudly—for a year's further study!

I received this precious letter at the schoolhouse, and immediately there entered the old, crazy tenement, a new light, and a new air—there bent over it a new heaven, and there bloomed around it a new earth—how grand and fair! Life put on its old glory, and Time took his swift wings, which he had long cast aside, and both went smiling around me, in a harmonious speeding away of the vapors that had gathered and settled in the vales, and on the mountain-tops of my future.

I called, that evening, on one of the authorities of my school—a man whose extreme ignorance was equalled only by his coarse presumption in questioning, as he sometimes did, not me, but my capacity to teach this paltry little school—and, with unspeakable inward satisfaction, announced to him that I had concluded to give it up, with the close of the week.

"I thought," I said, "that you might like to have an opportunity of engaging a more competent teacher, and that I would give you notice this evening."

I knew I was annoying him, for I was well assured that he valued my faithfulness, and only questioned my ability, by way of sustaining his own dignity.

"A better teacher!" he said, in his loud, unmusical voice. "I don't know anybody that wants a better one—if thee will only take a little more care in some things. Thee needn't go on account of that, if that's all."

"It isn't quite all, Mr. Smith. I am going to school myself, and it isn't likely that I shall ever again teach a little school like this. If I do, the people shall not be permitted to question my ability, as you have. I am not going," I added, "to learn anything I have taught, or that ever will be taught, here, but to apply myself to studies, that neither you, nor the children of your school, will ever hear of, unless by name; and I should like to speak a word for the comfort of the next teacher." I saw that I had his attention, and went on: "Don't employ any one

that does not know enough to teach your children, and that is not honest enough to do it faithfully ; but when you get such a person, let her work in her own way. Everybody does best so," I continued. "You farm your fields after your own fashion, and, if you are a good farmer, you do it much more comfortably so, than if somebody were always meddling with your ways. Do you not ?"

"Well, I guess I do. Thee's about right there."

"Then," I said, "do please to remember it, Mr. Smith. It will make a great difference in the willingness of your teacher to work for you. Nobody works as heartily, when they are always found fault with, as when there occasionally comes a little praise, or a few good-natured words, which show that their endeavors are understood and appreciated. I could not say so much for myself," I added, "while I was staying ; but now I am going, I don't mind making a little quarrel with you, for the sake of your children, and anybody who may come after me."

I could afford to be very pleasant in my reproof of this man, who had given me a deal of trouble, because the sun was shining on me at this time, and I was sailing away, with a fair wind, to broader and richer seas, where he and I should never more cross each other. I was invited to stay to tea, which I did; and when I took my leave, there was a golden sunset flooding the summer fields, and folding the still, dark tops of the locusts and poplars, in its warm and loving arms. I was two miles from home, but I seemed to be borne thither upon invisible wings; for I was there, unfatigued, before it was dark enough for lamps to be lighted.

But two more days—for it was now Wednesday—and I resolved upon "dismissing" on Friday evening. How quickly they went, and how quickly came the hour of glad emancipation, when, with two or three books of my own, and the other small articles, which I had kept at school for my convenience, I delivered the keys into the hands of one of the oldest girls, a child of nine, who stood tearfully by; kissed her exceedingly fair cheek,

and turned my back upon the house, and the spot, which seemed, now that I was leaving them, more like a prison than ever before. "God help the next one!" I said, compassionately, as I walked away past the thicket; and the birds, at their endless jubilee; and the stream, twinkling and glancing over its pure, bright bed.

If parents sympathized more with those who labor six or seven hours a day, over their young, undeveloped children—if people would consider the hard lot, and the inevitable weariness of this class of workers, and come more generously to their relief, recognizing in them some claim to human tenderness and indulgence—some needs, which their exhausting labors engender —if the old and the young, who are capable of understanding this, would endeavor, by helpful kindness, and rational amusement, to put some courage and life into the weary and chilled soul of the teacher, what a harvest society would reap from that neglected field! We demand, reasonably and dutifully, a high order of intelligence, and moral life, in the instructors of our children. We get one or the other, when it is possible—both when we can. We put this soul to the hardest tasks, to daily drudgery, to which that of the mill-horse is light and easy; we keep up the pressure which demands unflagging zeal, week after week, month after month, till their sum amounts to years, and we recognize in the laborer no other, or higher needs, than those of the quadruped—sustenance, shelter, and raiment. Many a man and woman has worn out life thus, and done service, that only God and the angels can fully estimate; and reached confirmed ill health, or old age, to sit down, and perish, unthanked and uncared for.

Instruction, which opens, develops and warms the soul, is the most God-like of all labor. The statesman, the jurist, the author, the inventor, the artist, are all co-workers, if true and faithful, with the professional teacher. Let not the hand, that opens the soil to the seed of our hopes, droop unclasped!

Wages paid, are no discharge from our obligation to these

brethren. Shall I ask a man or woman to sell me the soul, that God has given him or her, for so much money, to retail every day, and every week, for my own, and my children's good, the priceless inner power and life, without which their labor is worthless? and shall I never seek to replenish the fountain whence it flows, to bless me and mine? No; let me rather bind up and comfort this fainting spirit sometimes, when its burden is, perhaps, proving too much for it. Let me seek it out, and give it the helpful testimony I can bear to its well-done labors.

If you would have efficient and noble teaching, recognize in your teacher some claim to a higher reward than your dollars, for with them you pay also for the shoeing of your horses and the tinkering of your pans. The faithful hand which does well the labor I ask of it, is entitled to its wages, and just recognition that it has given value for what it receives; but when I ask the labor of the hand, and the eye, and the ear, and the tongue, and the heart, and the soul—all the vigilance and all the might of each—I owe for this something higher and more sacred than the money I give—something in kind returned for what I take. Let every neighborhood, where teachers are employed, pour upon them the gentle currents of social life. Have friendly gatherings once a week; informal meetings, where the pleasantest persons shall assemble for two or three hours' intelligent intercourse and recreation; reading, conversation, and, if possible, music and dancing—not to exhaust but to refresh—and let the teacher feel that he or she is the chief guest of these occasions. Such relations to parents would put power and life into the souls of teachers that would return to them a hundred fold in the culture of their children.

CHAPTER LXI.

"I would enjoy the present; I would live
Like one new born."

"Yet pause! for on thine inner ear
A mystic music grows,
And mortal man shall never hear
That diapason's close."

On Saturday afternoon, a week after I had given up my school, I was sitting with my friend, in whose house I had spent the interval, busily sewing on a silk dress—the first one I had ever been able to purchase—when, just as the very last stitch was taken, and the wonderful garment held up complete, for our mutual admiration, we heard the sound of swift carriage-wheels a-stop, then a quick foot, and there stood my brother before the open door. I had not seen him in two years and a half, and it seemed much longer than that, because during a part of the time I had feared we should never meet again. The pure joy of seeing him was greater than it had ever been before. I knew him now as a benefactor and friend, a guardian and protector. When the greeting and introduction were over, he said: "And have you really been making this handsome dress yourself?"

"Only the plain part of it," I replied; "Mrs. Norman has been kind enough to do the rest for me. Do you like it?"

"Very much. It has the right look," he said, eyeing it critically as I held it up before him.

"But now, just fold it and pack your trunk as quickly as possible. I must be back to ——kill to-night, to take the early boat up the river in the morning."

Remonstrance against the haste was useless. I offered none,

for I could be ready in half an hour ; but my friend vainly urged that there was another day before us.

"I cannot stay," he said ; "I have promised positively to be in A—— at three o'clock to-morrow afternoon, and I can only do it by returning to the river to-night."

Tea was hastily made while the packing was in progress upstairs, and in less than an hour we were on the road. I have never known a more delightful drive than that was. I had never before, since our early childhood, had John so long to myself as I was to have him now. We talked of everything fast, like people who are having a hurried interview, which may be broken off at any moment.

He told me how proud he was of my letters, and asked if I "had ever written anything but letters ?"

And when I said that I had, "but nothing that was worth preserving," he looked disappointed, and said :

"When you write anything after this, no matter what you think of it, you must not destroy it till some one else has seen it. I am in hopes of seeing you a woman yet that I can be proud of, but it will take some patience and labor, and you must keep that pride of yours down a little. Creep first and walk afterwards is the law ; isn't it ?" he asked, looking playfully into my face, which was every moment growing more serious.

"You haven't fallen in love with anybody back here I hope ?"

"No," I said, with such promptness and asperity, that he cried out :

"Hallo ! we've had something in hand I am sure, or we shouldn't be so fierce. What is it, eh ?"

"Nothing at all," I replied ; but knowing that he would not believe those simple words, I added : "Nothing ; but—I remembered then—an impudent person, who came to the house where I was boarding while I taught the school, and annoyed me a little. That's all."

"Sure you were not caught ?" he inquired.

"Very sure. I never think of him unless he is accidentally brought to my mind, and then it always makes me angry to remember how impertinent and ungentlemanly he was."

I did not like to characterize his conduct in any stronger terms, for it was unlikely that we should ever meet again, and certain that my brother's knowing his ill-treatment could do good to no one, since they would never see each other. For the future, I thought, nothing like this bitter experience can occur, for now I shall have somebody always to advise me what I ought to do, and whom I ought to avoid. I had a perfect trust in John's wisdom. Nothing can go wrong with me, I thought, when he is near.

At every pause in our talk, and they were few and short, I was trying to regain a consciousness of my position. My departure had been so sudden, and the joy of what was before me was so great and unmixed, that it was not easy to catch the future and combine it with the happy present, so that they should both seem to be, indeed, my own great possession.

As the darkness of evening approached, it was increased by heavy clouds threatening a shower. The wind was driving under the cover of our little carriage furiously, and a few large drops had been dashed in our faces, just as a closed barouche drove swiftly past us.

John shouted to the driver, and before I could speak I was astonished to hear him ask the man, as he stopped his horses, "if he had anybody inside?"

"No," was the reply."

"Well, then, tumble down, will you, my good fellow, and take my sister in there, or she will be drenched before we get to town?"

I began to speak, but he said, half impatiently, for the rain was increasing every moment: "Now, keep that woman's tongue of yours still till we get there; I know perfectly what I am about, and when we get to the hotel you shall have the whole chapter."

The driver held the door of the carriage open, and I sprang in, glad to take refuge from the coming storm, as well for the sake of my new bonnet as anything else. The door slammed to, and I heard the words: "Take her to the hotel—and be careful how you drive;" and we drove off.

How the rain poured! I could see through the little glass behind me that John kept close to us till it was utterly dark. We reached the town. I could not remember ever having been in lighted streets before, and so when the carriage stopped before a large house, brilliant with lamps, I seemed to be in an enchanted land. The driver ran up the steps and presently returned, accompanied by another person with an umbrella; they opened the door, let down the steps, and asked me to walk in.

"Is this the—hotel?" I inquired.

"Yes, ma'am."

I alighted, and when I entered the parlor, where a showy assemblage of ladies and gentlemen were sitting, and standing, and talking, and laughing, I found myself still further within the borders of fairy land.

A pianoforte stood open, and a beautiful young lady was being urged to sit down and play upon it. I could have joined in this importunity myself, I so longed to hear this wonderful instrument; but while it was going on a gentlemanly-looking person, with a pen in one hand and a large book in the other, entered, and looking about the apartment, came to me and asked if I "wished for a room, and would write my name in the register?"

I declined, and told him I expected my brother every moment, who would see to all I wanted.

What a comfort it was to say and feel this. It strengthened me so much. I had courage to look the man straight in the face while I said it, and to add, in answer to his questioning expression, that "my brother's name was Woodson; that he put me in the close carriage three or four miles back on account of the rain, and would be here directly himself."

At that moment I heard his quick, decided step in the wide hall, and at the next he entered the room. How proud I was of him! I had admired the elegant appearance and easy manners of the men before me, but there was not one so handsome as he—and none more graceful or self-possessed. What had dazzled me was evidently very commonplace to him, for after a word of inquiry as to my ride, and a report of his own, he said, glancing about over the company, "I will go and see our rooms, and then come for you."

I ventured to say "that I was hoping to hear the piano played before I went to my bedroom."

"Have you never heard one?" he asked, looking at me in such a way as showed that he understood me.

"Never. I never saw"——

"Hush," he said, in that tone which, while it is less noticeable than a whisper, more imperatively, commands the listener; placing himself with the words between me and my possible audience. "Hush, child! I had no idea you were so ignorant of common things."

I was chagrined and grieved, not alone at myself but that I should be a source of mortification to John, who, I could easily see, would be profoundly ashamed to have my condition known even to these strangers. While he was gone, I was endeavoring to compare myself with the young ladies present—not personally, that was impossible, but mentally—so far as I could judge of them by the talk I heard. It was certainly very poor. There was neither wit in their remarks upon persons, nor intelligence upon other matters; and no earnestness, apparently, about anything. Some poor gossip about individuals; some simpering denial of imputed accomplishments, or charms, or triumphs; some silly questions, which either meant nothing or answered themselves before they were framed, were the staple of all this clatter of tongues.

Then, said I, I am not inferior to these except in beauty, for I know I can cultivate ease and self-possession when I come to

mingle daily with polished people, as I shall now, and John shall not have cause to be long ashamed of me.

I did not hear the piano. That was a pleasure reserved to a later day of my progress in the civilization of art; but after a long talk with John, in the quiet of our rooms, which adjoined each other, I went to my bed, to lie broad awake through the whole night. The noise in the streets, which came distinctly up through the open windows, the excitement of the novel position, the contiguity of the crowd of men and women, which seemed, to my inexperience, vast—the change which a few hours had made in my surroundings, and the still greater change which another day would produce—all stimulated a train of thoughts in my mind which reached backward into the far past, and forward into the future, tossing, changing, shaping, and again melting into the grey and shadowy realms, from which I could summon no sleep and command no waking quietness. Yet I was happy—happier than it has been my lot to be on many of the wakeful nights that have etched themselves upon the soul's record of later years.

It is curious, how, in a healthy life, sleepless nights mark eras which remain forever distinct from each other. A single one, sometimes, coming from a great joy or sorrow, or a shock that has checked the vital currents in their channels, and shaken, as with an earthquake force, from border to border, the realm of the inner life, will stand out of the misty past for long years, aye, for the whole mortal term. It has become a feature in the landscape of memory, and is only lost sight of as headlands at sea are, when the vapors of fresh-gathering storms wrap them too thickly about. Let the present tumult of clouds, and winds, and waters subside, and there they come again, looming over the tranquil surface boldly as before.

In every earnest life, there are such headlands, upheaving themselves along the shore of the years—days of conflict; nights through whose long, silent hours the spirit forbids the approach of sleep, and holds its most solemn self-communings;

searches the past, explores the future, dives into the deeps, and mounts the heights; compasses the universe for its arguments, and grounds its deductions in the deepest depths of human experience to which it can penetrate.

Somewhat in this wild way, was I travelling on that, my first night in a city—first, too, of a glorious career which had long been promised, and was now come—a career of high scholarship. Of the natural sciences, except astronomy, I was in utter ignorance. Chemistry, botany, geology, natural history, with all their brother exponents of nature, and of God, were as yet sealed books to me. So, also, were most of the systems and opinions which intellect and genius have builded up, and the ages transmitted to us. The garden of time had been opened to me only by glimpses. I had but the vaguest notion of its limits and productions. History had given me the wars of arms, and their periods of cessation. It was as is if one should be conducted within the sound of Niagara, and expected to stay there on the assurance that the noise was the real and substantial power of the cataract, whereas we should prove by going forward, that is was but an effect of the force which is forever working its sure way deeper and deeper into the eternal rock.

Thus only did I know the past by its noise and rush; its bloodshed and its horrors—the outward and manifest effects of those deep, hidden workings, whereby the glorious revolutions of the ages are accomplished. I knew the tree that Cromwell reared, but not the hand that planted the seed whence it sprung. I knew that a terrible red sea had submerged France in the years of her first revolution, but I did not know that one of the hands that let forth that fearful tide, had been working at a rude printing press, more than three hundred years before, and another raised in defiance of religious despotism in Germany, while yet France lay lapped in glory, unapproached by the ideas which afterwards shook her from centre to circumference.

Cause and effect were not connected in my knowledge of

human progress, and thus my reading had been both more laborious and less satisfactory than it should have been. For I could not rest in a knowledge of mere facts. Given these, I was impelled to a ceaseless search for their cause, which it was wearisome to be always disappointed in finding, as, with my poor light and means, I so often had been.

Now I was to enjoy the inestimable privilege of placing my hand upon the hidden springs of events. I was to know somewhat of the inner as well as the outer of history.

I date far back of this time, a dim, vague, perhaps then unstatable conviction, which enlarged and whetted my desire for knowledge immeasurably, viz. a conviction that each branch of it bore closely and inseparably upon every other—not merely that there was an outward chain of connection, by which acquaintance with one facilitated the introduction to another. This exists obviously to all common thought and intelligence. But my faith, which years of ignorance and darkness never overturned or shook, was that, by an invisible, and to me indefinable power, or law, or bond, all truths and knowledges were connected to all others, and that following this law, if it were once found, from any starting point, we should reach outward and downward and upward, grasping on all hands, sources of continually increasing light, whereof the reflection should be as infinite and various as the truths of creation.

With no means of approaching any elucidation of this idea, which was most shadowy and intangible to myself, and which I should not have dared attempt to state, to the most indulgent friend, I yet cherished and at times dwelt on it, as I did to-night, lying awake and hearing with the outward ear the heavy fall of the summer rain upon roof and pavement. How different from the soft music of the twinkling leaves and dimpling grass! With all my far away flights of memory, hope and speculation, my ear was constantly sensible of the change which this noise testified, and an occasional thrill of thankfulness that I was here would course along my nerves as I heard it.

CHAPTER LXII.

"Early hath life's mighty question
Thrilled within the heart of youth,
With a deep and strong beseeching,
WHAT, and WHERE IS TRUTH?"

WE reached our destination the next day at two o'clock. What a morning I spent on the steamboat! It seemed to me happiness and contentment enough for a lifetime. John had a happy way of appealing to me for opinions on various subjects, which, though there was an occasional gleam of mockery in it, gave me, nevertheless, great satisfaction. I remember that we walked the deck, for neither of us had the gift of keeping still, and talked over Josephine's tragedy, heaping execrations upon Maria Louisa, and almost weeping for Josephine and Napoleon, whom I then regarded as about equally victims. We discussed also the good and great of our own country—Webster and Clay, for whom the idolatrous worship of my childhood was yet unbroken; Jackson, who was John's hero, and other men and measures, my knowledge of which greatly delighted him.

"I didn't think you were so much of a politician," he said. "Girls never care for politics."

'Oh, yes, they do," I replied; and I related how a schoolmate of mine and myself used sometimes to hold warm discussions with one of our teachers, and how this man, though he taught mathematics and philosophy, had actually betrayed the monstrous ignorance, one day, when some changes in the diplomatic corps were under examination, of likening our foreign ambassadors to religious ministers at home, and expressed the opinion,

that as changes of the latter were often found desirable, they would also prove good in the former cases ; and how, thereupon, we, his sage antagonists, looking at each other pitifully, retired, leaving the field to him ; and as soon as we were out of ear-shot, agreed that there could be no greater folly than attempting to put ideas into a brain so hopelessly befogged, and so gave him up.

I told this anecdote with more detail and freshness than I can relate it now, by way of proving to John that I was not alone among girls of my age in these interests. I remember that his laugh showed more amusement than appreciation, and he said : "Poor fellow ! What became of him after you two abandoned his case ?"

But for all those jeering words, and the inimitable humor of tone and look that accompanied them, I was not a bit put down or intimidated ; nor afterward, when he said, slily, at the door of my boarding-house, while waiting for it to be opened : "Shall I introduce you as an undeveloped Secretary of State or Postmaster-General ?"

"Stop your nonsense," I replied. "You just introduce me by my name, and I'll make known *what* I am."

In three weeks the term was to commence. It was wise that I was three weeks in advance of it, for it took me all the time that John could spare, and that I could catch, with the few acquaintances I made, to become sufficiently familiar with, and accustomed to, the city, to be able to sit down amid its din and rush to quiet and effective study. On the opening Monday—I shall never forget it—my brother came in the morning from his business to accompany me to the institution. It was a very handsome building of pure white marble, in simple—almost severe style of architecture, standing in a broad, pleasant street, that was comparatively quiet and strewn with the early falling leaves of autumn. I wondered, seeing how the trees were imprisoned in the stone pavements, that there should be any leaves to fall. I had often passed the edifice in my walks, and looked into its

deserted porch with something nearly akin to awe mingling with joy, that by and by I was to be one of the privileged few to enter there. The citizens had great pride in the school, which numbered among its pupils young ladies from the farthest States, and from foreign countries; and they were vain of the elegant structure which contained it, so that I was not likely to have my own appreciation of the advantages before me lessened by any opinions coming from others.

I had been directed by John the evening before to be dressed as I "would for church" by half-past eight, at which time I might look for him to be at the house. My good landlady, a kind, sisterly, lovable little creature, came to assist me after breakfast.

"She had partly expected a sister and cousin," she said, "to come from Massachusetts, to go into the Academy at the commencement of this term;" and she expatiated in a ceaseless strain, while fastening and arranging my dress, upon the high character of the school—the finished style of the pupils it turned out; their reputation as scholars—all in a refined, intelligent and sensible way, as a cultivated New England woman would.

When we reached the building, whole bevies of girls were thronging its broad porch and wide open doors.

"I shall go in with you," said John, "and introduce you to the Principal, but I cannot remain, and after that you must make your way alone. Don't be afraid to speak to some of the young ladies when you wish to. I think there ought not to be any very crushing weight of ceremony among school-girls. I am sure," he added, looking into their glowing and handsome faces, as they approached us, "I should not be long making acquaintance with some of them, if I were lucky enough to have the freedom of the establishment."

"No, no," I said, almost impatiently, "I dare say not; but you are impudent where I am timid, and deserve chastisement often where I need to be encouraged; so there's no use in telling

me what you would do, good-for-nothing. I shall get through in some fashion, I dare say, and after to-day of course I shall know where I belong, and just what I am to do."

We made our way along, up one of the flights of broad stairs, and into a room where the larger girls seemed to be chiefly congregating. Near the door stood a gentleman, to whom my brother spoke, and the next moment introduced me.

He was Mr. Hall, the principal teacher—a very gentlemanly-looking person, rather large but well made, with bold, decided features of a dark cast, and a large, clear, prominent eye, that was not black, but so deep and shady a brown, that it took a good direct look into it to convince you what its color really was. He looked very kindly at me, as he did at all the other girls, and shook my hand, saying that the morning session would not probably commence for an hour, but inviting me to go down to the wardrobe and lay off my bonnet and shawl. When I replied that I did not know the rooms, he called to a girl standing near us, in a lively little group, and introducing us to each other, said :

" Miss Nelson, will you be kind enough to show Miss Woodson to the wardrobe, and take her under your charge, as she is a stranger ?"

Of course she was happy, etc., and John, seeing me thus provided for, said, as we approached the head of the stairs :

" I can leave you now. I am sure you could not be in better hands ;" and bowing politely to my new friend, he went his way.

" It is my brother," I said, as she looked after him.

" So I supposed," was the reply. " You will come to the wardrobe first, will you not ?"

" Yes."

And while I was folding my shawl, and placing my bonnet on its hook, I was admiring and falling in love with my attendant. I thought I had never seen a face that expressed so much purity and sunny sweetness; and her voice was music itself ; her words

so clearly and purely enunciated, with such childlike gentleness and serenity in every action, look, and utterance, that I was charmed, for the moment, out of all concern for myself in the momentous affairs of the day.

In reply to my questions, Miss Nelson informed me that she was in her last year; that she had taken the first mathematical medal at the recent examination, and that there were about five hundred pupils in the Academy, of which ninety were members of the first department with her.

"Of course you will be with us," she said, as we returned up stairs.

"I suppose—I hope so," I replied; but feeling some painful doubts arising from her great advantages over me, whether I could be placed in classes with her.

Shortly after our return to the upper rooms, the loud, sonorous voice of Mr. Hall, standing near the central doors, went forth, inviting the young ladies to repair to the chapel, a large, elegant room two floors above us. There was immediately a soft stir and rush towards the stairs, up which a broad current of youthful life, beauty, grace, and gaiety, was sweeping for the next five minutes. I kept close to Miss Nelson, and congratulated myself, as I moved along in the crowd, that my dress was not inferior to the general style worn. I had so often suffered from a sense of noticeable poverty in this respect, that it was a substantial, and, I hope, an allowable satisfaction, to find myself on so important an occasion free from this embarrassment. My brother had wisely said, "Dress well the first day and the first week; after that it will not matter so much what you wear."

In the chapel we found a little man who looked smartly about on us with an important air, and, after we were settled, made us a little speech, congratulating us on having met together for so noble a purpose as the cultivation of our minds—informed us that though we might not know it, we were in the enjoyment of inestimable privileges in being members of that institution, and seemed, by his manner and tone, to suggest that the very great

greatness of our privilege, was chiefly owing to his presence there.

"Who is he?" I asked, of Miss Nelson.

"Mr. Wilkinson, the Principal."

"I thought Mr. Hall was the Principal?"

"No; he's the principal teacher, only."

I said no more; for, of course, I understood we were not to talk in the chapel; but this much I could not keep back.

A short chapter was then read; two or three stanzas of a hymn sung, Mr. Hall leading; a prayer made by Mr. Wilkinson; and then, the old members were requested to repair to their places, and the strangers to remain.

There were not many of us—only some twenty-five young ladies, and thirty or forty little girls. We were invited to recitation rooms, contiguous to the chapel, where we were examined, and assigned to our respective places. When Mr. Hall came to me, I was trembling with apprehension, lest by some blunder, or for real want of advancement, I should find myself placed in a department below the highest, which, as I could have but a year for study, would be an almost unendurable frustration of my hopes. I answered his questions, and, in addition, ventured on telling him what I wished, and hoped that I could do. He seemed to catch at my enthusiasm at once, and sat looking at me a moment, after I had done speaking, in such a manner, that I said, while I felt my cheeks growing warmer with the effort: "Do you think I can go into the First Department, sir?"

"Oh, certainly!" was the prompt reply; and then, he added the encouraging words: "I think you are ready for any studies that you may choose to take with us."

With what a glad whirl my blood mounted up, and up, into the topmost chambers of my brain, at these welcome sounds! I could have flown to tell John, who was little less anxious than myself; but I sat still, and when the word came, walked quietly down-stairs, and took the seat and table given me, as meekly as if I were not straining every nerve to suppress my too great joy.

I looked at Miss Nelson, smiled, and nodded, and sat still, waiting, now, the organization of classes. In due time, all was well adjusted.

I, and the young ladies whom I was mostly called with, had to do chiefly with Mr. Hall, for which I was very thankful. He said nothing, generally, about our great privileges, and but little of what we ought to do, but something in his words and tones put every pupil upon her utmost efforts at once. When Mr. Wilkinson spoke to us, though he did so in words of exhortation and encouragement, he seemed to strike our ambition down to coldness and death. He had no gift wherewith to inspire the spirit with a spark of the divine purpose—To Know.

I was enrolled in five classes, and went home in the afternoon with my catalogue of books that were to be bought, and of lessons that were to be learned for next day. Thus commenced my academic year, and thus it went on with increasing labor of writing, reading, reviewing, and addition of new studies, till I had all my time occupied in recitation, from nine till half-past three—the close of the winter day's sessions. What glorious nights those were for study. The window of my small room looked out upon the eastern sky, and many a morning the day-streaks shone there before I had fully completed my tasks.

I had a few classmates whose zeal in study equalled my own, and we ran a fearful race during that winter. Necessity as well as ambition drove me, and they kept me company. The laboratory occupied us one evening every week; the telescope and astronomical apparatus another; a miscellaneous course of lectures another, and after these, there yet remained the lessons for the next day; semi-monthly compositions, and the general reviewing, which we were liable to be caught up on, as on an uncomfortable hook, every day. It was very laborious, but, persisted in, it gave us the most satisfactory control over all the knowledge we had on those subjects. I think it did more to develop the mind and strengthen the memory, and

give us clear and defined ideas, than the first labor of study. Scholars are so prone to regard recitation as the chief end of study and the final disposition of every lesson, that with a vast majority, especially of average minds, there is literally no care or thought beyond that.

But this state of things was impossible with us. Having undertaken a study, we were expected, on any day thereafter, to be ready to give answers to general questions on it, and often to particular ones; if we could not, we were disgraced in our classes, and though there were many who preferred disgrace to labor, yet the effect on the whole was of incalculable good, and accounted to me for the boasted superiority of scholarship in the institution. In this I could not suffer the idea of falling below the highest level, and therefore toiled with an incredible application through the whole winter, growing thinner and less elastic as the weeks went by, until, when the first session drew to a close, I could not go up the long stairs, where I had bounded two at a time in the beginning, without stopping to breathe on the top of each.

I had repelled all my brother's inquiries, because I would suffer no interruption in my studies, and I believed that with the week's rest at vacation I should be able to go on with safety. Miss Nelson and I were great friends, and she thought, so strong and healthy as I had been, that I could bear it. I was greatly and generously aided in my labors by Mr. Hall, the amount and variety of whose learning bewildered me. His acquaintance with language and the sciences; his knowledge of history, of art, of invention, of metaphysics, seemed to me almost superhuman; and he was good enough to bestow sometimes great pains in counselling me, in criticising my style, and suggesting helps where I found difficulties.

I felt deeply grateful for this attention, and for a certain recognition, which I always received from him, either tacit or expressed, of a position and purpose, differing from the comfortable, well-provided students, among whom I was striving.

CHAPTER LXIII.

"Our true victories lie all beyond to-day,
It is the unattained for which we cry."

"I will go forward, sayest thou,
I shall not fail to find her now."

When the half-yearly examination came, I was well prepared to hold my place in the various classes to which I belonged. My brother managed to be present most of the time, and at the close of each day I was richly rewarded for all the weariness I felt, by his unmeasured and proud commendation. There was always with him also another person, whose presence was at once a stimulus and a dread to me—a gentleman whom I had seen but twice before this memorable week. He had recently returned from a tour to Europe, and was full of incidents of travel, and captivating, graphic description of places he had visited. When I first met him, he seemed to take especial pains to entertain me with accounts of what he had seen; and as a European traveller in those days was a much rarer person than now, I was not a little flattered and pleased with his attention. I was indeed very grateful, that a man who had not only enjoyed the best educational advantages at home, but had seen the wonderful Old World, with all its wealth of intellectual greatness, its art, its splendid refinements, its beautiful and accomplished women, should find in a poor, rude girl like me, anything worthy a second thought. And that he did was quite evident, when he came in at a certain hour on a certain day, according to a promise made three whole days before, to hear my class in geometry examined.

At that examination I was severely tried, and achieved a complete triumph. It was fortunate that I did, for a failure in the fatigued condition of both mind and body I was then suffering, would have utterly overwhelmed me. I was publicly complimented by one of the oldest men in the institution, for answering correctly a question I had never heard, as the sudden paleness of my face when it was first put, abundantly proved, and which, as my questioner enthusiastically said, he had never before had answered without aid, by any student, male or female, though he had put it to many. Congratulations poured in on every hand. It was the last day, and the last class, and happy for me that it was, for I needed John's arm when I got to the door, where, a little aside from the crowd that was pouring out, he and our friend Mr. Harrington stood, awaiting me. They, also, were full of congratulations, but Mr. H. had scarcely spoken his, when he said, "You look ill. You are very much fatigued."

I had to confess with something akin to self-contempt that I was. In truth, I found it difficult to keep my feet. With my previous feebleness from continued excessive labor, the severe efforts of the week, the excitement and sudden removal of it, by the close of our exercises, I was in a condition to make any real sympathy doubly precious to me. We went down-stairs, and while I walked to the wardrobe, and, with dear Mary Nelson's help, got on my cloak and bonnet, John stood in the hall waiting for me. When I came back, Mr. Harrington was gone. I was a little disappointed at this, but took John's arm, thinking very little of my victory, or of anything but the effort of getting home. As we opened the door to encounter the chilly February wind, our friend ran briskly up the steps, and said: "I have taken the liberty to bring a carriage; I am sure you had better ride home, though the distance is short."

I could not object, and we all got into it. That evening, a friendly old doctor, who had always taken a lively interest in me, from my first day in the city, sat by my bed, giving me, occasionally a few drops of some nauseous mixture from a vial

he had brought with him, and saying, between his excessive praises, and back-handed censure of my folly in overworking myself, that I should leave the books and go to the country for a month.

"Nonsense, doctor; I shall do no such thing. You said the other day you liked to see a woman show her will, sometimes, and now you may look for mine to appear."

"Well, at least, you won't study any more, miss, for a fortnight. Make your mind up peaceably to that."

"No, I'll have no compromise. I shall go right on with my classes, week after next."

"No, you won't."

"Are you trying to provoke me?" I said, wrathfully, for I was afraid his persisting would alarm John, who was sitting by, and then I should certainly be defeated.

"No, I don't want to do any such thing, though you are handsomer when you look a little angry, as you do now, than when you are so devilish serious. But I tell you that you won't go to school any more for a fortnight. Now keep quiet for a minute, and I'll tell you why. Your teacher that you all think so much of—what's his name—Hall?—yes, Hall—has been discharged by the Trustees."

"What for?"

"For mixing with people whose politics don't please them, they say."

"Who say, the Trustees?"

"No, but they—the world, I mean."

I meditated some time in silence. It was a great loss to me, for I knew that his equal in learning and capacity could not soon be found to take his place.

"What is he going to do?" I asked.

"Open a private school two weeks from Monday."

"Then I shall take two weeks' rest, doctor."

"I told you you would," he said, banteringly. "You see it's just as I say. Women never do know their own minds."

"You be hanged, if you please," I replied. "But are you sure that Mr. Hall is going to do what you say?"

"Yes; he told me so, after your examination was over this afternoon; and he said, moreover, that if a certain young lady would go to his school, and certain other young ladies too, who would be sure to if she did, he should feel very much encouraged."

"What do you say, John?" I asked.

"Go where you prefer to," he replied. "I am satisfied without undertaking to control you; but you had better weigh well the advantages and disadvantages on both sides. There is the diploma; and the medals you might get, are worth considering."

"Anybody who prefers them to the best instruction, may have all I could get," I said.

I rested wholly and as easily as I could for four entire days, and then my brother came in one evening with a small, neat white parcel in his hand, and said, "I have brought you two treats—an extraordinary and wonderful piece of news that will take your breath, and some of Old Dinah's cranberry tarts, to help you bear it."

"Well, then," I said, "let me have the shock first. The news first," I repeated, as he persisted in undoing the parcel. "It is contrary to all usage to take a restorative and follow it by a shock."

"That," he said with provoking deliberation, laying the paper carefully spread open on my table, "that is because people don't know what is coming, as we do. If they did, they would make themselves comfortable beforehand, so;" and he took one of the small tarts, and seating himself, coolly laid his feet upon my bed, and began to eat it.

I knew by his face that he had not exaggerated the interest of what he had to tell me, but I knew also that to undertake to hasten the telling would be fruitless; so I sat, most uncomfortably impatient, to wait his pleasure. How moderately and relish-

ingly he took the delicate pastry. I could have given him a round of hearty cuffs, and have no doubt I should have done it successfully, some months earlier.

At length he said, "I think your serene highness condescended to express a favorable opinion of a certain fair, blue-eyed young lady to whom I had the honor of introducing you six weeks or two months ago at Mrs. Rawson's ?"

"Miss Stapleton ?"

"The same, your highness."

"Yes; I thought she was very pretty; and amiable, and good, I am sure; wondering what, that was likely to happen to her, could possibly be so interesting to me.

"What of her ?"

"Nothing, except that she is to be married, just a week from this evening, about this hour, I should say," looking at his watch.

"Well," I said, "I have no objection; and I don't see how it can possibly concern me, since she is not likely to ask me to her wedding."

"Young ladies don't get married without marrying somebody, do they ? Perhaps it might interest you to know who the other party is."

"I hope he is a good man, whoever he is, for I am sure she will make a dear, good wife."

"He is a pretty good fellow, I think," said John, "and I agree that she deserves him."

"Who is it ?"

"Saving yer presence, it's me thin intirely."

"You !"

"Jist is that same, wi' respect to ye."

"You graceless vagabond," I said, "cheating me into the belief that you were wholly devoted to me: and here have you gone through a courtship, and are on the eve of marriage before I know it. Precious faith that is."

But we soon dropped raillery and banter, and came to more

serious tones. It was a very new and changed aspect of affairs to me, and not without its painful phase, either, though I had a real pleasure in his great happiness.

The marriage was rather hurried, he said, because four days after he was to start for the West and South.

"And will she go with you?"

"No, I shall leave her here with you."

CHAPTER LXIV.

"Then I heard
A noise of some one coming through the lawn,
And singing clearer than the crested bird
That claps his wings at dawn."

The wedding was the most considerable social event I had ever participated in. I met many people at the house of the bride's father, among others, Mr. Harrington, who very good-naturedly devoted the evening to me, and, with John's approval, attended me home, when the party broke up.

I entered Mr. Hall's school, but found not in myself quite the same power of application I had possessed before. I could not live in my books, and exclude the world altogether, as I had done. Mr. Harrington called to see me, once or twice a week; and the next day I was almost certain to find some opinion of his, or some passage of poetry that he had quoted, mixing itself up with my problems, or getting into the French exercises, or disturbing the affinities in Chemistry, or I remembered that I had never yet mustered courage to express, even in the most indirect manner, the gratitude I felt for his notice, which might have been bestowed on so many beautiful, accomplished persons.

I thought a great deal about this. One evening—it was one of the first that had come to our northern climate, from the

long-locked chambers of the South—I was walking slowly home, with my armful of books, when I met, a few doors from our house, the waiter, who said, "Oh, Miss Woodson, there's been a gentleman to see you. The same tall, handsome-looking one, that comes so often, you know. In an awful hurry he was, too; but he said he'd call again at seven."

"In a hurry!" I thought, as I went on more quickly. "What can have happened, I wonder?" And, in spite of myself, I felt quite agitated, and very impatient for seven o'clock. It was not yet that hour, when the bell rang, with a quick, strong pull; and, a moment after the door opened, I heard a flying step coming up the stair, to my door. It opened, and there stood Norah, the chamber-maid.

"That gintleman, miss, he be down-stairs, and he's afther wanting yees, right away."

In spite of my concern, I laughed at this peremptory message; but I went down, gravitating my face all the way to the parlor-door, where I saw Mr. Harrington standing, hat in hand, and cloak on.

"Can you not sit?" I said.

"Not a moment. I am to leave A——, in half an hour, for the western part of the State—in all probability for the Far West. It is very sudden, but I could not go without shaking your hand once again"—he was holding it, in a painful clasp, all the while—"and without some last word of kindness, that it would be pleasant to remember. Will you pardon me for asking it, in this informal way? The minutes are precious to me."

I could only say something, in broken speech, of having none but grateful recollections of his numerous kindnesses, and wishing that he might have a pleasant journey, and be very happy, wherever he went.

"Thank you! Pardon me." Then, raising my hand to his lips, he said, "I will write you from ——, my first stopping-place." And with the words he was gone.

I stood still, bewildered with what had happened, as well

as with the suddenness of it. Some old walls, which had seemed to shut me in a world of my own, separating me from the varied and sunny aspects of the womanly life, were suddenly thrown down. From beyond them, there came in a flood of soft and pleasant light, which had never before fallen upon me. In it, I went slowly back to my room. It was Friday evening. I laid my books carefully aside, in one upright pile, on my table, scrupulously placing the larger ones below; and, when that was done, I sat down by them. They were the same books I had had for months; but how diminished their power and importance! The same volumes!—but a larger one had just been opened to me, of more vital interest.

I would fain hope the wish is in thy heart to turn its pages with me at no distant day.

THE END.

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